

HEALING PATTERNS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE IN THE
SYNOPTIC HEALING ACTIVITY OF JESUS

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Doctor of Philosophy

by
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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation offers a new perspective in the study of biblical concepts of healing and restoration. It takes into account all kinds of healings/restorations, including physical, spiritual, and metaphorical. The first part of the research engages form critical scrutiny of the Hebrew words *rapha* (to heal), and *marpe* (health, healing). It includes a detailed analysis of all the occurrences of these words in their original contexts. This study leads to an establishment of a regular pattern or sequence of theological concepts that are ingrained in the Form of the two analyzed words. Subsequently, the form critical paradigm is taken as the interpretational key for the understanding and the internal coherence of the healing/restorative theology of the Hebrew Bible.

The second part of the study approaches the healing activity of the Synoptic Jesus in the framework of form critical patterns of *rapha/marpe*. Both the Hebrew Bible and the Synoptic theology of healing reveal a structured, sequential and apparently necessary connection between the action of healing and other theological concepts. While in general the Synoptic process of healing/restoration coincides with Old Testament healing trajectories and stages, at some critical moments the Evangelists introduce new elements that modify *rapha/marpe* patterns and thus define the nature and particular understanding of the early Christian concept of healing.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABD – Anchor Bible Dictionary

AUSS – Andrews University Seminary Studies

*BDB – Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. A Hebrew and English Lexicon
of the Old Testament*

BHM – Bulletin of the History of Medicine

BHS – Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

EvT – Evangelische Theologie

*NIDOTTE – New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and
Exegesis*

NJBC – The New Jerome Biblical Commentary

RHPR – Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses

TDNT – Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

TDOT – Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology

ZAW – Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

PREFACE

The research presented in this dissertation scrutinizes theological dimensions of the biblical concept of healing. It is divided into two parts. The first part surveys the writings of the Hebrew Bible while the second focuses on the healing activity of the Synoptic Jesus. Thus, I begin my investigation by analyzing theological thoughts about the nature and aspects of healing contained in the pages of the Hebrew Bible. Instead of focusing my attention exclusively on healing narratives illustrating literal restorations from physical illness to health, spiritual and metaphorical healings, I have chosen to approach the subject from a different perspective. The vital question was whether the words most frequently and commonly associated with health and healing had anything to offer in the process of a better understanding of theological healing trajectories of the Old Testament. It appeared to me that the best way and perhaps the only one to find out the answer was to examine all of the occurrences of the verb *rapha* (to heal), and the noun *marpe* (health, healing). The project required quite meticulous and thorough work on extensive material. Once the work was finalized the results turned out to be very rewarding having much to say about the concept of healing in the Hebrew Bible. They supplied a foundation for the delineation and establishment of form critical patterns of *rapha/marpe*; that is, a firm textual base for the discussion of the healing theology in the Old Testament. Since theological claims and explorations of this study are grounded on form critical findings concerning *rapha/marpe* I chose to include in this dissertation the

complete research because taken in its entirety it serves as the documentation and a reference that is neither found nor published anywhere else.

In the second part of the dissertation I proposed to see whether the healing patterns of the Hebrew Bible that emerged from the form critical stages of *rapha/marpe* had any correspondence with the theological ranges of the healing activity of the Synoptic Jesus. The comparison of the Old Testament and the Synoptic healings suggested a variety of conceptual similarities. My focus was not on thematic similarities as, for example, Elijah's reviving of the son of the widow of Zarephath and Jesus' resuscitating the son of the widow from Nain (1 Kgs 17:7-24; Lk 7:11-17). Rather I noticed that Synoptic restorative miracles (physical cures and exorcisms) presented certain theological structures, configurations and direct or implied links to other theological notions. These theological connections did not seem casual but rather intrinsically related to the nature of Synoptic healings. From this perspective Jesus' healing activities appeared to evoke and interrelate with other theological conceptions in a well-organized fashion. Both the Hebrew Bible and the Synoptic theology of healing revealed a structured, sequential, logical and apparently necessary connection between the action of healing and other theological concepts. The most interesting part, however, comes from the evidence that Synoptic theological makeup and conceptual reach of *healing* fits and can function within the form critical structure of *rapha/marpe*. At the same time, it is clear that the first three Evangelists enlarged the Old Testament healing vision with new paths and modifications that reflect theological and cosmological developments of their

times. By relating theology of *rapha/marpe* to the healing activity of the Synoptic Jesus we obtain an original perspective based on textual evidence. Thus the results of this research contribute new understanding of the biblical concept of healing. I am not aware of the existence of any study that has pursued the scrutiny of biblical and Jesus' healings from this angle.

From the methodological standpoint the character of this research required that arguments offered and directions adopted throughout the dissertation should be substantiated on the basis of original texts. Accordingly, for most of this study I use the primary literature, i.e., biblical texts, as the evidence, reference and support for my assertions.

PART I

HEALING THEOLOGY OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Form Critical Analysis of *rapha* and *marpe*

The subject of health, illness and healing in the Old Testament has been discussed on various levels, yet without great detail when it comes to a unifying theological perspective based on the Hebrew texts. While healing and health have received more attention, mostly in articles and dictionaries, the theology of healing has not been treated systematically or extensively within the frame of the Old Testament.¹ Even when scholars did discuss aspects of healing theology of the Hebrew Bible they would mostly base their findings on the individual texts containing the words *rapha* and *marpe* or other healing narratives.² Such an approach allowed them to reiterate what biblical texts already stated, for example, that in the Hebrew thought God was seen as the one who could wound and had the power to heal or that Yahweh was the healer of his people (Exod 15:26; Deut 32:39). To their credit, these types of analysis and subsequent synthesis of individual healing texts shed much light on the subject. This approach is also present in my research; yet I have gone a step further.

¹ The following articles offer general treatments of health, healing, sickness and disease in the Old Testament: Gerhard F. Hasel, "Health and Healing in the Old Testament," *AUSS* 21.3 (1983): 191-202; Paul Humbert, "Maladie et médecine dans l'Ancien Testament," *RHPR* 44.1 (1964): 1-29; Adolphe Lods, "Les idées des Israélites sur la maladie, ses causes et ses remèdes," *BZAW* 41 (1925): 181-93; R. K. Harrison, "Healing, Health," *IDB* 2:541-548; Howard Clark Kee, "Medicine and Healing," *ABD* 4:659-64; Max Sussman, "Sickness and Disease," *ABD* 6:6-15; David P. Wright, and Richard N. Jones, "Leprosy," *ABD* 4:277-82; Yair Zakovitch, "Miracle (OT)," *ABD* 4:845-56.

² Brief introductory information on *rapha* including parallels with other Semitic languages, etymology, statistics, semantic range, synonyms and antonyms may be found in two dictionary entries: Alan Kam-Yau Chan, Thomas B. Song, and Michael L. Brown, "רפא," *NIDOTTE* 3:1162-73; and Michael L. Brown, "רפא," *TDOT* 13:593-602.

The novelty that my study brings to the healing theology of the Old Testament comes from the form critical analysis of the terms *rapha* and *marpe*. Thus, in addition to the scrutiny of individual texts containing *rapha/marpe* I also explore theological patterns in which the studied words are embedded.³ It is my contention that these patterns offer the most appropriate and the most fruitful place from which the concept of healing theology can be grasped. In this sense “theology” is not a reflection on a particular healing text or even a group of texts but rather a conceptual construct arising from basic structure, pattern, or Form within which the unit *rapha/marpe* is employed. Before entering more into specifics I need to clarify the meaning of Form Criticism that applies to my study.

It is well known to Old Testament scholars that the discipline of Form Criticism has undergone radical changes and developments since the times of Hermann Gunkel.⁴ Today, not only are there several aspects of Form Criticism and problems with universally accepted definitions but also Form Criticism is a method that seems to be constantly evolving.⁵ Originally, it was thought that many written compositions of the Hebrew Bible reflected a pre-literary phase in

³ Odil Steck emphasized this form critical need to work on several texts: “Form criticism necessarily inquires beyond the individual texts to the construction elements and the formative models of the language used by the Old Testament authors.” Odil H. Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology* (trans. J. D. Nogalski, SBL Resources for Biblical Study 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 19.

⁴ For the brief history of Form Criticism one may consult Edgar V. McKnight, *What Is Form Criticism?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997).

⁵ For the recently updated discussion of various aspects of form critical studies see a collection of articles edited by Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). For the currents in the form critical debate one may refer to Rolf Knierim, “Criticism of Literary Features, Form Tradition, and Redaction,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 123-65.

which several oral forms of expression existed, for instance, blessings, legends, oaths, hymns, commandments, etc. German scholars named these forms *Gattung* while English speaking writers used the term *genre*. The general consensus among scholars held that genres originated in a particular social or religious environment, a seat in life or *Sitz im Leben*. Thus, the purpose of form critical research was to relate written texts to the living people and institutions of Israel by gaining insights into the oral traditions standing or underlying literary expressions.⁶ Former form critics used to divide biblical texts into portions and then reassemble them on the basis of internal coherence perceived as a *sort* or *genre* (*Gattungen*). They contended that these coherent portions could not be correctly understood within the literary framework unless they were interpreted from the pre-existing oral stage.⁷ Yet, as John Hayes pointed out, this close association of form critical research with only the oral stage of tradition “worked under a number of misconceptions and misapplications” since “written works also have their forms and structures and may be classified by genre.”⁸ Hayes also observed that “the overly enthusiastic re-creation of all-encompassing life situations or cultic events to which numerous genres have been related has

⁶ An introduction to the history, theory and applications of the traditional form criticism can be found in Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

⁷ See John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 31, 33.

⁸ John H. Hayes, ed., *Old Testament Form Criticism* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977), xviii.

certainly on occasions been overdone. The identification of genre elements with complete genres has sometimes led to fanciful conclusions.”⁹

In my study I am not interested in classifying an oral genre standing behind the *rapha/marpe* units. Neither do I intend to relate the analyzed healing texts to any particular Sitz im Leben of the historical Israel. Form critics have largely abandoned the practice of using the method for reconstruction of oral forms. Instead, many exegetes have focused on the role of forms as “normative models.” According to Buss, analyzing biblical structures as “model pattern” offers a major advantage of avoiding the treatment of the Bible as though each individual item spoke separately.¹⁰ In line with this my primary interest lies in establishing the “Form” of *rapha/marpe* understood in a broader sense of “a pattern of relationships” where one “deals with reasons for the various aspects of a structure in relation to the dynamics of the whole of which they are a part.”¹¹ I do not derive these “normative models” or “patterns of relationships” from the fragments of healing texts as such, that is from each individual fragment. Instead

⁹ Hayes, *Old Testament Form Criticism*, xviii. M. J. Buss offers an additional critique of the focus on the oral stage: “Gunkel’s mistaken belief in the regularity of genres on an oral level gave his approach special historical twist. He and some of his follower’s thought it possible to reconstruct oral antecedents for the written texts present in the Bible on the assumption that such antecedents exhibited the features of a single genre ‘purely’ or ‘simply.’ Accordingly, for some interpreters – especially in New Testament studies – ‘form criticism’ became identified with a reconstruction of oral forms or expressions lying behind the text. Pursued in this way, form criticism became a tool for historical criticism, instead of being considered worthy in its own right as a quest for patterns in human expression and life.” Martin J. Buss, “Form Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (ed. S. R. Haynes and S. L. McKenzie; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 73.

¹⁰ Buss, “Form Criticism,” 77.

¹¹ Martin J. Buss, “The Study of Forms,” in *Old Testament Form Criticism* (ed. J. H. Hayes; San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977), 2.

the patterns emerge from the contextual function, contents and semantic range of *rapha/marpe* within these fragments. Alternatively stated, full pericopes or fragments containing the *rapha/marpe* unit are still important but the spotlight rests on the healing words rather than on the entire fragment.¹²

In my study I propose to see *rapha/marpe* as carriers of theological patterns. The patterns consist in several common features that for the most part are shared by *rapha/marpe* texts scattered in various types of literature throughout the Hebrew Bible. These patterns are neither related to nor determined by any particular historical context and thus they are atemporal. These atemporal patterns carried by *rapha/marpe* can be applied to various historical contexts of the Hebrew Bible because of the general character of their meaning and theological function. In summary, I am not working on determining whether healing texts (specific verses with *rapha/marpe* taken along with their immediate contexts) can be classified as a type of a healing genre. Such an attempt would certainly fail since the *rapha/marpe* texts appear in a variety of literary forms and contexts that escape a unifying classification. Instead, speaking exclusively of *rapha/marpe*, as independent words, I will argue that they in fact offer a Form because of the ingrained recurring references that evoke other theological themes. These references can be either clearly stated in the passage containing *rapha/marpe* or just implicit. It is not necessary, and

¹² John Barton affirms this distinction between the context, or contents, and the unit itself: "The 'form' properly so called, is the structure or shape of an individual passage or unit, as in this may be described without regard to the content of the passage." Barton, "Form Criticism (OT)," *ABD* 2:839.

probably a mistake, to refer this Form to a pre-existing oral tradition or genre (*Gattung*) if that tradition is understood as a process of composing of healing stories. Even though some healing narratives in the OT might have existed on the oral level, still, theological patterns embedded in *rapha/marpe* transcend these stories. It is crucial to notice that some of the healing accounts of the Hebrew Bible do not contain *rapha/marpe* terminology. This is a very important point: in their function *rapha/marpe* are not primarily healing words; rather, the action of theological healing can be aptly described by means of the functions of *rapha/marpe*. This realization made me change my initial methodology applied to this study.

Initially, I intended to classify *rapha* and *marpe* according to their literal, metaphorical, and spiritual meaning. In that sense the study of these two words would presuppose healing as the overwhelming semantic content of the analyzed terms. The results would be quite predictable, that is, physical healing, metaphorical healing, and spiritual healing. This is how some dictionaries and lexicons discuss *rapha* and *marpe*. I abandoned this approach not only because it would be repetitive, although supplying a greater detail to what is already known, but also because it would produce meager results. This is so because while such an approach would provide a basic classification (mostly lexical and semantic) it would offer relatively limited theological perspective. More importantly, assigning to *rapha* and *marpe*, a priori, the meaning of *to heal*, and *the healing*, imposes contemporary understanding on ancient texts. For this reason, I intentionally abandoned the concept of healing as the primary,

preconceived meaning of *rapha* and *marpe*. So, instead of debating how the notion of healing fits into various usages of *rapha*, and *marpe*, I concentrated my attention on what these words actually might have meant in their original context and what was their theological function, if any. This approach opened a new and much more productive perspective. Thus, the issue of determining whether *rapha* should be understood in a particular occurrence as *to heal, to repair, to restore, to revitalize*, etc., became of a secondary, or sometimes marginal importance. On the other hand, from the form critical perspective, I found out that the verb is embedded in a pattern or a sequence of theological concepts for the vast majority of its usages. It is precisely through and in this pattern that *rapha* clearly reveals its semantic range and its full theological extension. Consequently, it seems to me more appropriate to speak of a theology of *rapha* rather than *rapha* as a primarily healing verb. This means, perhaps paradoxically, that analyzing *rapha* from a healing perspective might cripple its semantic identity and therefore obfuscate the meaning of healing in the Hebrew Bible. Conversely, studying the theological function of *rapha* within its pattern clarifies the nature of healing in the Old Testament.

As mentioned above, it is methodologically imperative that the meaning of healing not be imposed on the action of *rapha* a priori. The concepts of health and healing go back to early stages of human conscious awareness throughout tribes, cultures and civilizations. The idea of healing can function on several levels. For example in modern English the concept of healing can be related to physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, figurative and other types of

restoration to soundness, wholeness and proper functionality. It would be risky and incorrect to transfer modern cultural and religious associations that accompany the word *healing* to the contexts of healing in the Hebrew Bible. By so doing one would just reaffirm what is already known about the idea of healing from the 21st century culture. Consequently there would be little to add to the concept of biblical healing because it would be identical with what we already know. In my study I will demonstrate that the form critical patterns of *raphalmarpe* evoke a chain of theological concepts that were familiar to biblical writers and audiences but certainly alien to modern popular conceptions of healing. Thus, the imposition of modern healing conceptual associations on the Hebrew Bible would distort the biblical meaning of *raphalmarpe*. Form critical reconstruction helps to prevent such an arbitrary transfer of meanings by establishing the Form referred to also as “linguistic shape” or “structure” of a meaningful unit. Odil Steck explains how the Form or structure unites itself with the unit:

Anyone wishing to formulate something comparable works with catchwords or word associations from intellectually pre-fashioned linguistic fields which are familiar to the author and to the author's addressees.... A text contains presuppositions which an author shares along with conscious or unconscious knowledge and culture. One must clarify these formulations and simultaneously illuminate the dynamic path to formulation in order to determine what one formulates, why it was formulated in precisely this manner, what the author means and intends with these formulations.... The author, as with the author's addressees, shared a pre-existing linguistic world. From that world, already available patterns and possibilities are adopted in order to communicate what the author wants to say.¹³

¹³ Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 96.

The above comment leads Steck to the assertion that

the author's outlook and intention must be deduced from the linguistic shape. However since the linguistic world of ancient Israel is no longer intimately familiar to us, this deduction can only occur in the process of form critical reconstruction.¹⁴

This is where my study of *rapha/marpe* receives the greatest emphasis from the form critical method. Dividing the words, particularly *rapha*, into their secular and theological usage I will suggest that the basic pattern of transition from a negative to a positive state derives from the secular usage of the verb. In other words it derives from the pre-fashioned, pre-existing linguistic and intellectual¹⁵ concepts understandable to both groups: the writers and the addressees. In a second phase the verb receives a theological connotation where its Form expands to new ranges. From the simple notion of transition from a negative to a positive state the theological usage of *rapha/marpe* acquires an extensive theological pattern. This process will become evident in the course of the study. I will show how the inquiry into these theological patterns not only illuminates the meaning of healing in the Hebrew Bible but also offers an organizational center, an interpretive kernel for the systematization and understanding of the Old Testament theology.

¹⁴ Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 98.

¹⁵ The concepts of "linguistic" and "intellectual" worlds overlap in some areas and certainly this applies to the biblical usage of *rapha/marpe*. Both fields interact and share some common elements. Steck, however, draws a strict distinction between "linguistic" and "intellectual" from the perspective of biblical exegesis. He assigns the "linguistic area" to Form Criticism, while the "intellectual world" belongs to the Tradition History. See Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 16-17.

In my analysis of texts with *rapha* and *marpe* as well as in form critical insights I deliberately avoid making references to the New Testament. This is despite the fact that theological similarities, overlaps, developments, etc., are numerous; yet in order to shun the danger of reading Christian concepts into the Hebrew Bible theology I choose to remain silent as to these connections. This is to safeguard the main objective of this study, namely to derive the theology of healing of the Old Testament solely on the basis of the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter 2

Analysis of the Verb *rapha* in the Hebrew Bible

Analysis of *rapha* in the Pentateuch

Gen 20:17

וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וְאֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ
וְאֶת־חֵיתָיו וַיֵּלְדוּ:

Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children.

Genesis 20:1-18 presents the story of the divine punishment and the subsequent healing of Abimelech. The reader learns that while Abraham was staying in Gerar he misled local people in regards to his wife Sarah telling them that she was his sister. After Abimelech the king of the Philistines abducted Sarah, God threatened him with death for taking a married woman. Yet, God promised that Abraham would pray (פָּלַל) for Abimelech and the intercession of the patriarch would spare the king's life as long as Sarah was returned to her husband. Even though Abimelech did promptly return the woman along with generous gifts, the curse of infertility fell upon him and his household. At the end of the story, only after the intercession of Abraham did God heal Abimelech, his wife and maids from infertility.¹

¹ There are two other similar events although they do not involve healings. The first one is about the Pharaoh who took Sarah to his palace believing Abraham's lie that she was the patriarch's sister (Gen 12:10-20). The text informs (Gen 12:17) that God punished the ruler of Egypt and his household with great afflictions (נִגְעִים וְדִלִּים). The noun נִגַע points to a stroke, or plague, and is usually associated with diseases. In this episode Abraham made no intercessory prayer for the healing of the Pharaoh or other Egyptians. The second instance where the wife is said to be one's sister is illustrated by Isaac who told the people of Gerar that Rebecca was his

In this story, the verb *rapha* occurs only in verse 17. God is the only source, force and grammatical subject of the action of *rapha*. It is a healing *from* a negative state of infertility where the inability to procreate is seen as divine punishment. Thus, the account presents God as the one who disrupts the original state of proper bodily functions and then restores the affected people to fertility, or the state of correct reproductive functioning. As we will see later, this aspect of the Deity operating on the level of striking and restoring is directly expressed in the Book of Deuteronomy in the form of the divine oracle: “It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal,” (Deut 32:39).

Abraham plays an important role in the process of healing. Although the castigation descended upon Abimelech and his household “automatically,” it was only through Abraham’s prayerful intercession (פָּלַל) that God took action leading to the restoration of fertility. What the reader can legitimately deduce from the text is that if Abraham did not intercede on behalf of Abimelech there would be no restoration. In this way Abraham becomes a necessary medium of the divine healing. It is his prayer that dispenses, prompts and activates Yahweh’s healing forces directing them toward the sick.

sibling (Gen 26:7-11). Only Abimelech’s timely discovery of the truth prevented the people from incurring the guilt (חַטָּאת) of taking someone’s wife (Gen 26:10). Through his earlier experience with Abraham and Sarah (Gen 20:1-17), Abimelech knew that God would punish such an offense with some kind of bodily affliction, or dysfunction. Since in this case a transgression was not committed, neither intercessory prayer nor action was taken. The triple attestation of basically the same theme indicates not only a common source, but also a unified message. Howard Kee argues: “The fact that these stories may be variants of a single tradition serves only to underscore the conviction evident in these materials that God brings sickness on those who violate the divine statutes, even unintentionally.” Kee, “Medicine and Healing,” *ABD* 4:660.

There is also a moral connotation to the entire event. God punished Abimelech for his transgression, taking someone else's wife. Even though Abimelech did not know that Sarah was Abraham's wife,² God did not consider that relevant for not inflicting a punishment. The violation of the law and the following punishment take place even in the absence of awareness on the part of the perpetrator. In the present story the offense did not consist in direct disrespect toward the God of Abraham. Instead, it was a violation of a social custom, generally accepted as law, requiring that one should not take somebody else's wife as his own. At this point of biblical chronology that was not even the law of the Covenant since the events of Sinai would happen much later. The tradition behind the story in Gen 20:1-18 as well as the written composition must have seen God as the guardian of these laws protecting social order and morality. From other stories of Abraham there is no literary evidence that God would be compelled to intervene in moral and social disorders among the heathens. He would do so, however, in situations when his chosen individuals were involved and interacted with non-Jewish people.

In summary, Genesis 20:1-18 delineates a basic pattern for the theological use of *rapha*. It consists in the divine disruption of the original state of functionality intended as a punishment for a transgression. The illness produces a shock leading to repentance. Then, eventually through the intercession of a

² Abraham lies about his true marital relationship with Sarah (Gen 20:1). He explains this in terms of fear of being killed by the people of Abimelech (Gen 20:10). When confronted by Abimelech about his lie, Abraham, in addition to the fear factor, adds that Sarah is indeed his half-sister (Gen 20:12).

human agent, Yahweh's chosen one, the healing restores things to their normal course.

Gen 50:2

וַיֹּסֶף אֶת־עֲבָדָיו אֶת־הַרְפָּאִים לַחַנֹּט אֶת־אָבִיו וַיַּחַנְטוּ הַרְפָּאִים אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:
Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel.

The word *rapha* occurs twice in this verse as a Qal participle masculine plural absolute (הַרְפָּאִים). A typical translation renders it as physicians. In the Hebrew Bible it is the plural form of an infrequent participle רָפָא, *physician* (Jer 8:22). The context of Gen 50:2 clarifies that הַרְפָּאִים, indicates here something different than “physicians” understood in a traditional sense, that is, those who attempt to restore a living human body to its lost normal functionality. Instead, here the participle הַרְפָּאִים describes those who take care of a dead human body. Thus, *embalmers* becomes a more appropriate rendering. The Greek translation pays attention to this distinction. In rendering Gen 50:2 the Greek version twice employs the noun ἐνταφιαστής, *undertaker, embalmer*. However, when הַרְפָּאִים means *physicians*, as in Jer 8:22, then the Greek text uses ἰατρός. The use of *rapha* in the presently analyzed verse reflects its secular aspect. The process of embalming Jacob/Israel reflects the Egyptian practice of mummification and in itself offers “no moral or theological implications.”³

³ Richard Clifford and Roland Murphy, “Genesis,” *NJBC*, 43.

Exod 15:26

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמַע לְקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְהִישָׁר בְּעֵינֶיךָ
 תַּעֲשֶׂה וְהִאֲזִנָּה לְמִצְוֹתָיו וְשָׁמְרָתָּ כָּל-חֻקָּיו כָּל-הַמִּחְלָה אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַתִּי
 בַּמִּצְרִים לֹא-אֲשִׁים עָלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפֵאֲךָ:

And he said, If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer.

In this verse the verb *rapha* takes form of a Qal participle masculine singular construct with the suffix 2nd person masculine singular. This allows us to translate כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפֵאֲךָ either as “for I, the Lord, am your healer, or “for I, the Lord, am healing you.” In either case the participle *rapha* is related to physical restoration which can be argued from the presence of sickness (מַחֲלָה) that in the past God had inflicted in different forms on Egypt.

The theological context is rich and extensive. The Divine promise of keeping Israel disease-free depends on several factors and conditions. The people must listen to God and act morally, as well as observe the commandments and statutes. It appears from the text that all of these requirements must be fulfilled in order to avoid divine displeasure and punishing illness. Frankly, it is an ideal quite impossible to reach for any society. From this perspective Exod 15:26 offers a good theological justification of all the illnesses that Israel would be afflicted with. In other words, Israel's misfortunes are due to her lack of total adherence to God and his laws. As we will see in further examples, this will become a normative interpretation in theology related to *rapha* throughout the Hebrew Bible, with the possible exception of the Book of Job. In this way biblical writers will adopt and reason from the perspective of the principle to never blame the God of Israel for either national or personal

disasters, but to blame the people because of their moral defects and religious unfaithfulness.

The word *rapha* in this text is not related directly to any disease. The whole discussion about Israel suffering diseases that befell the Egyptians is only theoretical. At this point God is neither an actual healer, nor healing from anything. It is the situation of disobedience that would potentially cause disease. Yet, *rapha* is not related to the healing of this potential disease, contrary to what may one's first impression. Instead, *rapha* comes as a parallel to the absence of disease earned by religious loyalty. Alternatively stated, the absence of disease means a continuous action of *rapha*. Consequently, the meaning of *rapha* points to the generation of physical wellness in a religiously faithful Israelite. This distinction is very important since *rapha* intended as a healing action implies a previous negative state of disruption of the proper bodily, spiritual, social, or emotional states generally referred to as disease. Instead, *rapha*, understood as an ongoing process of wellness, as it is in this fragment, points only to the positive reference to a proper, uninterrupted state of being and functioning. Similarly, *rapha*, when used to indicate a healing action, implies the process of transition from disruption to proper functioning. On the other hand, when *rapha* is employed to refer to the production of wellness, then it points only to a continuous state and situation of proper, prosperous, divinely blessed function and existence.

Exod 21:19

אִם־יָקוּם וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ בַּחוּץ עַל־מִשְׁעָנָתוֹ וְנָקָה הַמִּכָּה רַק שְׁבָתוֹ יִתֵּן וְרַפָּא יִרְפָּא:

If he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed.

Exodus 21:12-31 contemplates various cases of personal injury. Verses 18-19 discuss the case of one man injuring the other with a fist or stone during a quarrel. If the injured one does not die, but he is put in bed, then the one who inflicted the blow shall be acquitted. This, however, is under the condition that the injured one is able to walk with the help of a staff. The aggressor will be obligated to compensate the sufferer for the time lost during the disability. In addition to that, the aggressor will have to take care of, or provide for the injured one until he is completely healed.

The word *rapha* occurs only in verse 19 in the compound unit **וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא**, meaning *completely healed*. Here the verb *rapha* relates to the physical restoration of the human body. The logical sequence points first to the bodily injury, a violent disruption of normal and proper physical activities of a human being. After the negative state of the absence of the proper bodily functions comes the second phase, that is, the recovery that culminates in the thorough curing, **וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא**. The intensified expression **וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא**, represents the beginning of a new phase for the body, that is, the return to the condition of full functionality just as before the violent disruption took place. The benefit represented by the action of *rapha* does not consist in adding anything new or extra to the functionality of the body. It simply indicates the return to the original state.

There are no direct theological implications related to the use of *rapha* in this verse. God is neither involved nor mentioned in the process of

healing. Healing is not conditioned by repentance or conversion, religious observance, personal holiness or lack of thereof. *Rapha* in this context is detached from any spiritual dimension and it simply illustrates the final stage of the self-healing process of human body.

Lev 13:18

וּבִשָּׁר כִּי־יִהְיֶה בּוֹ־בַעַר שָׁחִין וְנִרְפָּא:

When the body has a boil on its skin and it is healed.

Leviticus 13 speaks about various kinds of skin blemishes. The pericope 13:18-23 discusses the appropriate procedure for the person who had a boil on the skin that has already healed. It is the priest who has to examine the post-boil condition. Depending on his findings, the priest will declare the recovering person either clean, unclean, or to undergo a seven-day quarantine. The verb *rapha* occurs in verse 18. It simply indicates the advanced stage of the natural self-healing process of human skin. Of course, it is not yet the entire recovery since further priestly evaluations are still needed. Instead it is only partial healing specifying the cessation of the boil. The form of the verb is Niphal Perfect that functions either as a simple passive or reflexive. Thus, one may translate וְנִרְפָּא שָׁחִין as either “the boil was healed,” or “the boil healed itself.” This suggests that the verb expresses natural physical healing without any theological connotations or ethical conditioning.

Lev 13:37

וְאִם־בְּעֵינָיו עָמַד הַנֶּתֶק וְשָׁחַר צִמְחָהּ בּוֹ נִרְפָּא הַנֶּתֶק טָהוֹר הוּא וְטָהֲרוּ הַכֹּהֵן:

If in his sight the scale has remained, however, and black hair has grown in it, the scale has healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean

The fragment Lev 13:29-37 discusses yet another skin disease. This time it is about a sore on the head or cheek sometimes referred to as scab, or scaly eruption of the skin. Similarly to the previous case, in Lev 13:18-23, the priest will evaluate and pronounce his judgment regarding the sick person. The verb *rapha* occurs in verse 37 where positive results of the priestly scrutiny lead to the proclamation that the scab has been healed (נִרְפָּא הַנֶּחֱק). Also in this verse, the verb *rapha* occurs in the form of a Niphal Perfect designating a self-healing of the scab. As in the previous example, also in this fragment no theological or ethical contexts accompany the healing verb.

Lev 14:3

וַיֵּצֵא הַכֹּהֵן אֶל-מַחֲוֵיץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וַרְאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָנָה נִרְפָּא נִגַע־הַצֹּרֶעַת
מִן־הַצֹּרֶעַת:

And the priest shall go out to the outside of the camp. Thus the priest shall look, and if the infection of leprosy has been healed in the leper...

Leviticus 14:1-9 describes requirements for purification after leprosy.

Leprosy in this case shall not be understood as a permanent condition but rather as a temporary skin disease. The verb *rapha* is used in verse 3 in connection with priestly examination of the “leper,” outside the camp. If the priest finds that the sore of leprosy has healed (נִרְפָּא נִגַע־הַצֹּרֶעַת), then a purification ritual will follow. As in the previously discussed legalistic/casuistic treatments of the diseased, also here *rapha* expresses physical self-healing with no theological or ethical implications.

Lev 14:48

וְאִם-בָּא יָבֵא הַכֹּהֵן וְרָאָה וְהָיָה לֹא-פֶשֶׁה הִנָּע בְּבֵית אַחֲרֵי הַטֹּחַ
 אֶת-הַבֵּית וְטָהַר הַכֹּהֵן אֶת-הַבֵּית כִּי נִרְפָּא הִנָּע:

If, on the other hand, the priest comes in and makes an inspection and the mark has not indeed spread in the house after the house has been re-plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean because the mark has not reappeared.

Leviticus 14:33-53 discusses “leprosy” of houses. Leprosy in this case refers to some kind of a fungus that infests walls and even penetrates into other structural elements of a house.⁴ After spotting the infection the owner of the house is supposed to come to a priest to have him evaluate the house. After having applied certain remedies, such as the replacement of stones and the re-plastering of the building with new mortar, if the infection appears again the house must be demolished. If, however, there are no signs of the fungus the priest will declare the house clean since “the infection has been healed,” (הִנָּע) (נִרְפָּא), v. 48. The ritual of the purification of the house (vv. 49-53) is identical to that of the purification of a leper.

The verb *rapha* relates neither to theological nor to ethical aspects. It is used in the context of the restoration of an inanimate object. The healing consists in the permanent disappearance of the fungus from the walls of the house. The healing is only a possibility and it is not conditioned by good moral standing. It may or may not take place. The removal of the infected stones and the application of the new plaster with fresh mortar reminds one of remedies given to a sick human being with the hope, but not certainty, of recovery. In terms of his direct divine intervention God seems to be totally absent from the

⁴ Roland Faley, “Leviticus,” *NJBC*, 70.

healing process. There are no intercessors or human healing agents that would intervene with their miracle-working powers, like Moses or Elijah. So, if the healing does take place to whom should it be attributed? The human contribution consisting of the replacement of the infected parts of the house point only to the creation of favorable conditions for the healing, but is no guarantee of a positive outcome. This leaves us with the unknown force that would determine the healing or its failure. Scientifically, the healing would be the consequence of the complete removal of all the microscopic particles of the fungus that are able to reproduce. From the biblical perspective, however, this is an area veiled in silence and perhaps mystery.

It is important to notice that although God is absent from the healing process either as direct agent or remote source of healing, he is responsible for the sending of the “disease.” Verse 34 states “When you enter the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a plague of leprosy on a house (וַתֵּחַתִּי נֶגַע צִרְעָתָהּ בְּבֵית) in the land of your possession....” This indicates that God is perceived as the origin of the disease: “The phrase reflects the Hebrew attitude of overlooking secondary causes in attributing all things to God as the ultimate cause.”⁵ The theological perspective of the writer of Lev 14 seems to imply that some of the actions and deeds initiated by God are left to undetermined, unknown and unpredictable factors when it comes to final results. God sends the disease, human beings attempt to eradicate it, but the outcome remains unknown. One would expect some kind of positive divine influence

⁵ Roland Faley, “Leviticus,” *NJBC*, 70.

especially at the crucial stage determining the healing. Yet, it is either absent or not explicitly stated by the writer of Lev 14.

Num 12:13

וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר אֵל נָא רַפֵּא נָא לָהּ:

Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, O God, heal her, I pray!

Numbers 12 tells the story of how God punished Miriam with leprosy after she and Aaron criticized their brother Moses. It was Aaron who begged Moses to forgive them their foolish sin (חַטָּא) and not to let Miriam remain affected by leprosy (vv.11-12). Then, Moses prayed to God for the healing of his sister. Refusing an immediate curing, God commanded that Miriam be confined outside the camp for seven days. After the period of her expiation she would be allowed to return to the community presumably healed.

In this healing narrative the disease comes from God. The text indirectly links Yahweh with the sending of leprosy⁶ by specifying that the divine anger (אַף) was kindled (הִקְדָּה) against Miriam and Aaron (v. 9), and that Miriam became infected immediately after God left the tent of meeting (v. 10). Although responsible for both, God is quite distant and detached from the disease just as

⁶ The disease referred to by the Hebrew word צִדְעָה, commonly translated as *leprosy*, finds its major discussion in Leviticus 13-14. Scientific analysis of these chapters rules out the probability that what is known today as leprosy, *Mycobacterium lepra*, has anything in common with the skin conditions described in Lev 13-14. David Wright and Richard Jones after presenting several arguments for the distinction between the two diseases pointed out: "If these [scientific] considerations do not entirely rule out leprosy, at most it would be only one among many skin diseases that could be considered *tsaraath*. But it is doubtful if leprosy existed at all in the ANE at the time of the OT so that it might be considered *tsaraath*. No certain historical attestations of the disease exist (in documents or in material finds) in this area of the world before the time of Alexander the Great." Wright and Jones, "Leprosy," *ABD* 4:278.

he will, later, be remote from the healing. There is neither warning against nor announcement of the upcoming disease. The leprosy falls upon Miriam instantly in a supernatural manner. There are no symptoms of the progressive incubation of the disease or its development. Miriam gets sick instantly and miraculously. The cause of Miriam's leprosy is her sin (חטא) consisting in speaking against Moses, God's faithful servant and intimate friend to whom Yahweh speaks face to face in plain language (vv. 6-8). It is worth noticing that only Miriam is punished for her offense while Aaron suffers no consequences at all.

The narrative presents two agents of healing. Aaron is the first to react to Miriam's repugnant physical condition (v. 12). Yet, he does not pray to God for an intervention as one might expect; instead, Aaron addresses Moses. But even here, he is not asking directly for Miriam's healing; he is pleading with Moses not to lay upon him and Miriam their sin (אֶל־נָא חֲשֵׁת עָלֵינוּ חַטָּאת), (v. 11),⁷ in other words to "forgive" them. In this scenario Aaron plays the role of a secondary agent of healing, although chronologically he is the first one to take action leading toward the curing of the sick. With this, the text may be implying that God does not heal when the request is made by an actual sinner who has not yet expiated his offense, namely Aaron. On the other hand, the text exalts the figure of Moses who, because of his special status in the eyes of God, becomes an effective mediator in the healing process. It is Moses who directly addresses God and explicitly prays for the healing (v. 13). The final curing of Miriam is implied in the

⁷ This reflects the mentality of linking sin to disease. For example 2 Chr 7:14 suggests that forgiveness is a prerequisite for divine healing.

text, but not stated explicitly. One may reasonably assume that after seven days of her leprosy she got well. The involvement of God in her healing is not mentioned. As in the sending of leprosy, also here the role of God is remote and only implied. Although God sent sickness, he is reluctant to heal Miriam in an instant; she needs to suffer the consequences of her offense (v. 14). It is interesting to notice that God is not concerned with Miriam's illness but with Moses' honor. Similarly, in contrast to Aaron, Moses, the principal agent of healing, shows no concern for Miriam's leprous condition. He takes intercessory action only after (perhaps only because of) the plea of his brother Aaron.

The means of healing in this story is the prayer of Moses only. There are no gestures of the agent, no remedies applied, no conversations between the sick and the agent. The sick is given no admonitions and she is not required to perform any special ritual or to express faith and repentance. In fact one cannot deduce from the text that Miriam has ever repented for speaking against Moses. Typically, in healing texts with *rapha* one would expect the notion of conversion (*shuv*), yet is it remarkably absent.

Deut 28:27, 35

27 יִכָּכָה יְהוָה בְּשָׁחִין מִצָּרִים (וּבְעַפְלִים) [וּבְטֹחָרִים] וּבַגֶּרֶב וּבַחֲרָס
אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תוּכַל לְהִרְפֹּא:
35 יִכָּכָה יְהוָה בְּשָׁחִין רַע עַל-הַבְּרָכִים וְעַל-הַשָּׁקִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תוּכַל
לְהִרְפֹּא מִכֶּף רֹגְלְךָ וְעַד קֶדְקֶדְךָ:

27 The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. 35 The Lord will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.

In Deuteronomy 28, Moses informs the people about both blessings for their obedience (vv. 1-14) and curses for their disloyalty (vv. 15-68) to the divinely promulgated Law. Among the curses are sickness, defeat, despoilment, exile, fruitless labor, foreign invasions, and plagues. The verb *rapha* occurs twice in the section dedicated to curses. In both instances (vv. 27, 35) *rapha* assumes the same grammatical form coming with the identical phrase: אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִרְפָּא לְהִרְפָּא. The negative Imperfect Qal of יָלַל, in the second singular masculine and the Infinitive of the Niphal of רָפָא, suggests the following translation: “from which you cannot be healed.”

In both instances the verb *rapha* is placed in the context of several divine punishments for those who do not hearken to the voice of the Lord, their God (v. 15). It is emphasized in both verses that it is Yahweh who will strike (יִכֶּה יְהוָה). God inflicts the punishment that is beyond remedy. The threat is only potential and its materialization depends on the lack of religious fidelity among the Israelites.

Deut 32:39

רְאוּ עַתָּה כִּי אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי אֲנִי אֲמִית וְאֶחָדָה
מִחַצְתִּי וְאֲנִי אֲרַפָּא וְאֵין מִדִּי מַצִּיל:

See now that I, I am he, and there is no god besides me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from my hand.

Deuteronomy 32:39 expresses the pivotal theological statement of the Hebrew Bible regarding the role of God in healing. God is the originator of sickness and misfortune as well as the one who has the power to restore and heal. Wounding and healing come in the larger context of putting to death and

giving life. God has absolute power and no one can interfere with his decisions. The theology of Deut 32:39 will be echoed in other *rapha* passages of the Hebrew Bible. Seeking healing from anyone besides the God of Israel will not only be futile but it will be equated with religious unfaithfulness.

Summary (Pentateuch)

The process of *rapha* generally follows the state of disruption of proper functionality. It may result in a loss of physical health, disorder of proper bodily functions, or interference with the intended use of an object (Lev 14:48). The general state of this interruptive disorder may be called disease, illness, or sickness. God is shown either as a direct subject (Exod 15:26; Deut 28:27, 35) or indirect remote source of the disruption (Num 12). Yet, it may also be another human being (Exod 21:10), or presumably natural causes (Lev 13:18; 37; 14:3) that are responsible for the illness.

In most cases the presence of illness requiring the action of *rapha* indicates that some kind of transgression took place. Disloyalty to God, disregard for his commandments, or violation of customarily accepted social and moral requirements illustrate transgressions. In its punitive quality illness causes pain, suffering, fear, and at times irreversible damage or even death (Exod 15:26; Deut 28:27; 35).

There are some embryonic indications that illness may be intended as a motivating means for conversion. This could be seen in the stories about

Abimelech's change of mind and the punishment of Miriam. In both cases, however, it is impossible to prove that a true sorrow was expressed for the offense committed. In the case of Abimelech, fear of death and disruption of procreative capacities would be a sufficient reason to return Sarah. From Miriam's story one will never know if she was truly repentant for speaking against Moses. Thus, one can argue that fear and pain might be seen as sufficient reasons for conversion even in the absence of true repentance.

There are some elements resembling expiation. When Abimelech sends generous gifts to Abraham along with Sarah, it is a form of compensation for the wrongdoing. The pain of the seven-day leprous condition, looking half-dead with partially consumed flesh, can also be taken as Miriam's expiation for her offense. In fact, God refused the immediate healing of Miriam in order that she could pay for her sin by suffering (Num 12:14).

In some instances there are human agents of healing. These are people who are not afflicted by illness but somehow are related to the situation that requires the action of *rapha*. These agents can be divided into three groups: those who intercede like Abraham and Moses, those who evaluate the progress of healing (priests), and those who take some kind of medicinal actions in order to facilitate healing (re-plastering the walls). They don't have independent power to heal but in a more or less active manner are parts of the process of the divine healing.

Based on Num 12:11, one may connect healing to forgiveness. Aaron begs Moses not to count his and Miriam's sin. It is not an appeal for divine

clemency but a request directed to the agent of healing not to take into account the offense committed against him.

The word *rapha* indicates the final stage of transition from a negative state of illness to the state of restoration to the original condition. When *rapha* occurs in the context of previous transgression there are no new or additional benefits resulting from the healing. Simply, it is the return to the original situation of proper functioning or state of being.

There is a rudimentary notion that the action of *rapha* is not only the transition from a negative state of dysfunction to restoration, but that it indicates the continuation of proper functioning. This will be clearly attested in other books beyond the Pentateuch that we will scrutinize later. Exodus 15:26 makes a conditional promise that if people obey God, listen to his voice and keep all his commandments, they will not suffer all the diseases (מִחֲלָה) that befell the Egyptians. It is a negative way of expressing a positive concept of ongoing health. Beyond the Pentateuch this concept is sometimes expressed as *marpe*, or ongoing good health and well-being. Both the action of *rapha*, when dissociated from a restoration of a previous negative state, and the noun *marpe* come close to the semantic range and theological function of the word *shalom*.

The role of God in the sending of illness or standing behind the action of *rapha* is not stable. Sometimes it is God who directly sends the disease. Sometimes there is no mention of the origin of the disease. The same can be said about God being involved in healing. In some texts he does heal but he is also ignored in other cases of healing (skin diseases when unrelated to

punishment). Similarly, there are examples of the use of *rapha* with no theological or moral contexts when a natural process of self-healing is intended (Exod 21:19; Lev 13:18, etc.).

Conditional promises of either healing or absence of diseases lay the foundations for theological explanation and justification of various illnesses that will happen to Israel, either collectively or to individual members. Yahweh is never to blame, instead, it is the lack of total adherence to God that brings national and personal disasters which need the action of *rapha*.

Analysis of *rapha* in the Historical Books

1 Sam 6:3

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲסֻמְשְׁלָחִים אֶת־אֲרוֹן אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־תְּשַׁלְּחוּ אֹתוֹ
 רִיקָם כִּי־הֵשֵׁב תֵּשִׁיבוּ לוֹ אֲשֶׁם אִזְ תִּרְפְּאוּ וְנֹדַע לָכֶם לָמָּה לֹא־תִסְוֹר יָדוֹ מִכֶּם:
 They said, if you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but you shall surely return to Him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you.

The use of *rapha* in 1 Sam 6:3 comes in the larger context of the loss and capture of the Ark of the Lord. After defeating the Israelites at Ebenezer near Shiloh (1 Sam 4), the Philistines transported the Ark first to Ashdod, then to Gath and Ekron. In all these cities the presence of the Ark caused some adversities that eventually escalated to the state of general panic among the Philistines (1 Sam 5). The text mentions the mysterious breaking of the statue of Dagon, the plague of mice, and the outbreak of hemorrhoids. In view of such a national disaster, Philistine priests and fortune-tellers decided to return the Ark to the Israelites along with a guilt offering. In their judgment this would assure healing

and the removal of the hand of the God of the Israelites from the Philistines (1 Sam 6:3).

While the verb *rapha* seems to refer primarily to the healing from hemorrhoids, the removal of the devastating divine hand indicates the cessation of other disasters, a further aspect of restoration to the original state. The verb occurs in the Imperfect Niphal form of the second person plural. This points at the passive translation “you will be healed.” God of the Israelites comes as a logical healing source since it was He who inflicted disasters and illness upon the Philistine cities (1 Sam 5:6, 9). In the view of the Philistine leaders the anticipated healing is conditioned by the guilt offering. The guilt consisted in taking the property of a powerful God, stronger than Dagon. Although the Philistines executed their plans, the biblical text remains silent in regards to the actual healing of the Philistines.

Theologically the verb *rapha* in this story is imbedded in the pattern that can be laid out as offense-repentance-expiation-healing. Similar patterns were attested to in the healings of Abimelech and Miriam. From the present narrative the reader can infer that the offense might occur even without the transgressor’s knowledge of committing any wrong. The repentance is not necessarily a deep sincere regret but rather a decision to do whatever is indispensable to reverse the punishment. The element of expiation may consist in prayerful intercession (Moses), or an offering (Philistines). Finally, the meaning of the healing action of *rapha* indicates the restoration to the original condition that existed before the

divine punishment. This theological schema of offense-repentance-expiation-healing applies indiscriminately to Israelites and to pagans.

1 Kings 18:30

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵיהֶם לְכָל-הָעָם גִּשְׁוּ אֵלַי וַיִּגְשׁוּ כָל-הָעָם אֵלָיו וַיִּרְפָּא
אֶת-מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה הַהוּא:

Then Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me. So all the people came near to him.
And he repaired the altar of the Lord which had been torn down.

The story of the contest on Mount Carmel between Elijah and numerous prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kgs 18), illustrates the use of *rapha* in regards to inanimate objects. After the pagan prophets failed to induce Baal's supernatural intervention, Elijah called the people of Israel to himself to demonstrate the efficacy of his God. After the people gathered Elijah began with the restoration of the altar of the Lord that had been destroyed (1 Kgs 18:30). From the subsequent verses the reader learns that the sacrifice offered by Elijah, despite being wetted three times, was consumed by the fire that descended from heaven. People interpreted this unusual occurrence as the confirmation of Yahweh's divinity and superiority over other gods (1 Kgs 18:30-39).

The verb *rapha* occurs in v. 30, and it is used for the description of Elijah's rebuilding of the altar. The context in which the verb is employed suggests the following meaning: restore, rebuild, reconstruct. This meaning is reinforced by the use of the accompanying verb הָרַס, *break down*, *tear down*, indicating the previous demolition of the altar. Thus, the action of the verb *rapha* entails the transformation that occurred between the negative state of uselessness and destruction and the new state of functionality. It is worth noticing that the new

state which resulted from the action of *rapha* reflects the original condition – the functional state of the altar – without adding to it any new qualities.

Elijah is the only agent of the verb *rapha*. God is not involved in the physical restoration of the altar in any way. The entire narration of 1 Kgs 18 has an intense theological purpose of demonstrating the supremacy of Yahweh over Baal and of accrediting the position of Elijah against the false prophets. Yet, despite this lofty theological goal, the usage of *rapha* in verse 32 has no direct theological implication; rather, it indicates a simple human action of repairing an object.

On the other hand, from a form critical perspective this non-theological usage of *rapha* reveals some important aspects. Accordingly, the action of *rapha* has a restorative character. It is not a creative force, or an improvement over the previous condition in the sense of creating something radically different. Rather the action of *rapha* causes a removal of disabling effects of disruption of the original state, intended use, functionality or being. Even though *rapha* can remove the negative results it cannot go back in time and prevent the disaster from happening. One may also notice that the original good state of an object and its condition after the repair, or the action of *rapha*, are not identical. Even though the object has preserved its original identity – it is the same altar – the process of reconstruction has brought new elements that did not exist in the original altar, perhaps some stones, wood, or mortar. This points to the fact that the action of *rapha* is more of a transformation back to the original blueprint of an object rather than a magical restoration back to the original condition as if the

destruction and its disruptive effects have never taken place. The distinction is subtle but essential. When *rapha* implies transformation it means that the repaired object has been re-created in its original image. It also confirms that a damage or loss was real and on some ontological level will have permanent effects. Thus, the negative state of destruction of an object becomes a part of the history of that object even after its functionality is restored. On the other hand, if the process of *rapha* were a simple reversal of the condition of the damaged object to its initial good state then *rapha* would indicate a sort of dream-like transition where the negative phase of destruction gets magically erased as if it never took place. Perhaps this is something analogous to a person waking up after having a nightmare during which he broke his leg. But the secular usage of *rapha* illustrated by 1 Kgs 18 has nothing to do with this kind of transition. On the contrary, the process of *rapha* not only acknowledges the real destruction and its effects but it also can take place only if such destruction really happened. It eliminates neither the reality nor the painfulness of the loss. The above observation on the secular usage of *rapha* has consequences for the theological employment of the verb. By the time biblical writers used the verb in its figurative meaning they must have been acquainted with its secular usage in daily life.

2 Kings 2:21-22

21 וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־מוֹצֵא הַמַּיִם וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ־שָׁם מֶלַח וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה־אָמַר
יְהוָה רַפְּאֵתִי לַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה לֹא־יִהְיֶה מָשָׁם עוֹד מוֹת וּמִשְׁכָּלֶת׃
22 וַיֵּרְפוּ הַמַּיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה כַּדְּבַר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר׃

21. He went out to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, Thus says the Lord, I have purified these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer.

22. So the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

After Elijah was taken to heaven on a flaming chariot and his miraculous powers were transferred to his apprentice Elisha, the account in Second Kings 2 proceeds to tell how Elisha purified the waters of a spring in Jericho. The text indicates that people complained to the prophet about the bad waters (וַיִּמָּוֶת וַיִּשְׁכַּל, v. 19), causing death and sterility (וַיִּשְׁכַּל וַיִּמָּוֶת, v. 21). Elisha restored the water of the spring to its original good quality by throwing salt into it (v. 21). The verb *rapha* describes twice the end of the process of restoring the water to its previous wholesome state and keeping it in its potable condition. The first usage of *rapha* comes when the prophet speaks in the name of God “I have purified these waters,” in verse 21. The second usage occurs in verse 22 where it is affirmed that the waters were purified and have remained clean until the present day. In both instances (vv. 21, 22), the contextual meaning of *rapha* points to the restoration of the water to its original good condition. It was the departure from that good state that rendered the water bad. The action of the verb *rapha* shows the transition between two contrasting states. The first state is negative, describing water as “bad,” causing “death,” and “sterility.” After the action of the verb *rapha* took place, the water passed to a new state, opposite to the previous one; that is, the water became good.

The purifying of the water takes place through a double, human and divine, agency. Verse 21 informs us that the restoration of the water occurred after Elisha cast salt into the spring and proclaimed the divine oracle. The restorative role of the prophet was a physical, tangible, visible, and audible

action, but it was God himself who issued the power of restoration: "Thus says the Lord: I have purified these waters," (כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה רָפָאתִי לַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה) (v. 21). In this way the usage of *rapha* in the context of miraculous deeds evokes a double dimension that can be expressed in several parallel terms: human/divine; material/spiritual; visible/invisible, etc. When a *rapha* text involves a divine agent, then the action of the verb encompasses these two dimensions at the same time. The agent operates on the level of reality perceptible by human senses. By so doing he activates invisible powers or energies attributed exclusively to Yahweh. Even though it is the divine power that procures the restoration, it is up to the agent and his discretion to activate these supernatural forces and direct them to a specific object that is in need of restoration.

2 Kgs 8:29a; 9:15a

וַיָּשָׁב יוֹרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְרַפֵּא בִּיְזְרְעֵאל מִן־הַמַּכּוֹת אֲשֶׁר יָכְחוּ אֲרָמִים

So King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him

2 Chr 22:6a

וַיָּשָׁב לְהִתְרַפֵּא בִּיְזְרְעֵאל כִּי הִמָּכּוּ אֲשֶׁר הִכָּחוּ בְּרָמָה

So he returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which they had inflicted on him at Ramah.

The passage informs us that king Joram, son of Ahab, was injured during the battle against the Arameans at Ramoth-Gilead. This injury prompted Joram to withdraw from the battle and to return to Jezreel to recover from his wounds. Yet, since Joram was soon murdered by Jehu, the full recovery never took place (2 Kgs 8:25-29; 9:14-26).

The healing verb *rapha* occurs as a Hithpael Infinitive Construct in both 2 Kgs 8:29a and its doublet 2 Kgs 9:15a as well as in the parallel version of Second Chronicles 22:6. It indicates a natural self-healing that takes place in the human body with the probable assistance of customary remedies of that time. The causes of illness, wounds inflicted during the battle, belongs to the realm of human activity. Although direct theological and ethical implications are absent in connection with *rapha*, one could argue that they exist in the larger context. King Joram was the son of Ahab and Jezebel; all of them were leaders of Israel known for religious idolatry. Thus, the wounds inflicted by the Arameans might be seen as the expression of God's wrath toward the house of Ahab in general and Joram in particular. It is no coincidence that the prophet Elisha, a zealot for religious orthodoxy, dispatched a guild prophet to anoint Jehu as the new king of Israel. Finally, Jehu, by murdering Joram and Jezebel, put an end to the idolatrous dynasty of the house of Ahab. This gives some bases to argue that God himself was responsible for Joram's wounds, death and the termination of his reign. From a theological perspective this story illustrates that God prevents natural healing when the subject of the healing is in conflict with religious fidelity.

2 Kgs 20:5

שׁוּב וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־חִזְקִיָּהוּ נְגִיד־עַמִּי כֹה־אָמַר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד אֲבִיךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־תַּפְלִתְךָ רָאִיתִי אֶת־דַּמְעָתְךָ
הִנְנִי רִפָּא לְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי תַעֲלֶה בֵּית יְהוָה:

Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, Thus says the Lord, the God of your father David, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord.

2 Kgs 20:8

וַיֹּאמֶר חִזְקִיָּהוּ אֶל־יֹשְׁעִיהוּ מָה אֹת כִּי־רִפָּא יְהוָה לִי וְעָלִיתִי בַּיּוֹם

הַשְׁלִישִׁי בֵּית יְהוָה:

Now Hezekiah said to Isaiah, What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me?

According to 2 Kgs 20:1-11 when Hezekiah, the king of Judah, became seriously ill the prophet Isaiah visited him announcing that the king was going to die.⁸ Despite this horrible prediction the king started praying and asked God to remember his, that is Hezekiah's, faithfulness, devotion and righteousness (v. 3). The prayer generated an immediate reaction on the part of God who instructed Isaiah to return to Hezekiah and tell him that his prayer was heard and he would be healed within three days (v. 5). In addition to the healing God would add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life and protect his kingdom from the Assyrians. After this, Isaiah ordered a remedy for Hezekiah's illness: a cake of figs that should be laid on the boil. Isaiah's confidence in the recovery of the king was counteracted by Hezekiah's asking for a sign that his recovery would indeed take place. Refusing Isaiah's proposal for the sign, a shadow going forward ten steps, Hezekiah insisted on the shadow going back ten steps. After Isaiah prayed to God (for the shadow miracle, not for healing), the Lord made the shadow go back the ten steps.⁹ The verb *rapha* appears twice in the story: first in verse 5 where

⁸ The verb *rapha* does not occur in the parallel texts of 2 Chr 32:24-26,31 and Isa 38.

⁹ In the parallel text of Isaiah, it is God himself who offers a sign, the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps (Isa 38:7-8). The sign regards only the healing. There is no mention of Hezekiah going to the Temple after three days as in 2 Kgs 20:5. A thanksgiving poem, for the recovery from the illness, attributed to Hezekiah is present in Isaiah 38:9-20 only. The poem quotes Psalms and alludes to other biblical texts. Only after this thanksgiving section, is there a brief mention of the cake of figs followed by Hezekiah's question about the sign assuring him that he indeed would go to the Temple. The Isaian text omits the three-day period. In contrast to 2 Kgs 20:12, Isa 39:1 speaking of the envoys from Baladan, king of Babylon states that the messengers came because of Hezekiah's illness and recovery. In 2 Kings the recovery is not mentioned at all in the context of Babylonian messengers. Hezekiah's sickness is mentioned also in 2 Chr 32:24-26. The Chronicler diverges from the favorable presentation assigned to

God says: "Behold, I will heal you," (הִנְנִי רֹפֵא לָךְ), and then in verse 8 in Hezekiah's question "What is the sign that God will heal me?" (מָה אֹת כִּי־יִרְפָּא יְהוָה לִי).

Second Kings 20 does not relate Hezekiah's illness to any known transgression. No reason for the king's impending death is given, either. Dissimilar to most other healing narratives, here the afflicted person prays for himself. What seems to make God reverse his decision is the righteousness and humility of Hezekiah: the king turned his face to the wall, prayed and wept bitterly (2 Kgs 20:2-3). Nothing is said about the contents of Hezekiah's self-intercession, particularly there is no mention of healing as the conclusion of the story. We have observed the same absence of the explicit mention that healing took place in the stories describing the punishments of Miriam and the Philistines (Num 12; 1 Sam 6).

The healing agency of Isaiah consists in prescribing the remedy in the form of a cake of figs to be laid on the boil. This remedy was not divinely prescribed; instead, it came from the prophet himself. The relationship between God's promise of healing and the fig cake remains unclear. There are two questions: did God choose to heal Hezekiah through the cake and should Isaiah be considered a crucial element in the healing of Hezekiah? I would propose to assign healing roles as follows: God's involvement consists in the divine sanctioning of the foreseen remedy prescribed by Isaiah. This means that God

Hezekiah by 2 Kings and Isaiah. He does tell about Hezekiah's illness, prayer, and God's miraculous sign given to the king. Yet, Hezekiah is accused of pride and ignoring the Lord's kindness shown to him. Second Chronicles also informs us that after Hezekiah repented, God removed his wrath from Judah and Jerusalem.

was in favor and approved of the recovery of Hezekiah, although he was not engaged directly in the healing process. The direct healing would come from the curing properties of the fig cake. In this sense, Isaiah could be credited the accurate insightful choice and application of the curing remedy. This perspective leads us to the idea of the harmonious coordination of the divine plans with the actions of the agent despite the absence of explicit communication. Another, less plausible, solution comes with the scenario where God directly, in a supernatural form, heals Hezekiah. The use of the fig cake would have only a peripheral and symbolic meaning without any real curing power, perhaps a form of placebo.¹⁰ In this scenario, the role of Isaiah as a healing agent would be seriously diminished.

2 Chr 7:14

וַיִּכְנְעוּ עַמִּי אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ פָנַי וַיָּשֻׁבוּ
מִדְרָכֵיהֶם הָרָעִים וְאֲנִי אֶשְׁמַע מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶסְלַח לְחַטָּאתָם וְאֶרְפָּא
אֶת־אֶרְצָם:

And [if] my people on whom my name is called be humbled, and pray, and seek my face, and turn back from their evil ways, then I -- I hear from the heavens, and forgive their sin, and heal their land.

The use of the verb *rapha* occurs in the context of God's conditional promises given to Solomon (2 Chr 7:12-22). Accordingly, the faithfulness of the people will bring divine blessings while apostasy will cause misfortune. One of the results of the unfaithfulness will be the infertility of the land devastated by

¹⁰ The agency of Isaiah in 2 Kgs 20 depends on the meaning of the fig cake. If the cake had an active role in the recovery of the king then the prophet functions as the agent of the divine healing. If, however, the cake was unessential in the healing process then the role of Isaiah as the agent of healing would be rather questionable. Isaiah in such a scenario should be called a communicator of God's words rather than an agent of healing.

locusts and the lack of rain (v. 13). On the other hand, when people abandon their evil ways (וַיִּשְׁבוּ מִדְּרֹכֵיהֶם הָרָעִים), turn to God by seeking his face (וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ פָנָיו), and praying (וַיִּתְפַּלְלוּ), then he will forgive their sins (וַיִּסְלַח לְחַטָּאתָם) and revive their land (וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־אֲרָצָם). The verb *rapha* describes the positive change that the land would undergo. The contextual meaning of *rapha* is that of revive, recover, restore, and revitalize. As in previous examples, here also *rapha* is the verb, the action of which brings a transformation and transition from a negative state to a positive one. In 2 Chr 7:14 God is the only agent of revitalization. Although the object of the action of the verb is inanimate (אֶרֶץ), the restoration process is conditioned by people's ethical and religious choices. This ethical aspect was absent in Elijah's restoration of the altar and Elisha's purifying of the water (1 Kgs 18). To some extent, one could speak of a dual agency of *rapha*. Namely, God is the one who stands behind the transforming and restoring power of *rapha*. On the other hand, it is the people who by their ethical choices determine whether the force of *rapha* will ever be put into motion.

2 Chr 16:12

וַיַּחֲלָא אָסָא בְּשָׁנָה שְׁלוּשִׁים וְתֵשַׁע לְמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּרִגְלָיו
עַד־לְמַעַלָּה חָלָיו וְגַם־בְּחָלָיו לֹא־דָרַשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה כִּי בָרָפָאִים:

In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians.

Second Chronicles 16 describes the last acts of Asa, the king of Judah, before his death. When compared to a parallel text in 1 Kgs 15:9-24, the Chronicler presents Asa in a definitely negative way. God's seer Hanani rebuked Asa for creating an alliance with Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, against Baasha, the

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king of Israel (2 Chr 16:7). Asa's fault consisted in relying not on God but on the king of Aram. The imprisonment of Hanani and the oppressive treatment of some of Asa's people added to his guilt (v. 10). Finally, when Asa contracted a severe disease of his feet, he turned to physicians (רפאים) instead of seeking his healing from God (v. 12).

The word *rapha* occurs in the form of רפאים, as a Qal participle masculine plural absolute exactly the same as in Gen 50:5 (Jacob's embalmers). In 2 Chr 16:12, however, the Greek translation uses a typical equivalent *ἰατρός*, physician. The employment of *rapha* in this verse has some theological implications. It unfavorably denotes pagan physicians practicing an unspecified kind of curing. For the Chronicler, turning to these healers, just as Asa did, implies the lack of trust in God and religious infidelity. This means that 2 Chr 16 understands God as the only legitimate healer, at least for the people of the covenant (Exod 15:26; Deut 32:39). The text, however, is silent about such a practice for pagans neither condemning nor approving their going to physicians. It is not necessary to assume that Asa's disease was related to his religious infidelity. First the Chronicler does not make such a connection. Second, even the positive description of Asa in 1 Kgs 15:23 mentions the disease. The passage in First Kings, however, says nothing about the physicians, perhaps in order to make the king look better. This would corroborate the argument that for both Kings and Chronicles God is the only legitimate healer while seeking healing assistance outside of the religious establishment of Israel is equivalent to religious infidelity.

2 Chr 30:20

וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־הָעָם:

And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people.

In this passage the word *rapha* is used in connection with the intercession of a third person. Second Chronicles 30 describes the efforts of Hezekiah, king of Judah, to celebrate an ecumenical Passover in the period of the post-exilic restoration. The text says that some members of the northern tribes of Israel did not follow required rites for purification and consecration before taking part in the Passover. This legalistic violation would certainly anger God according to the Chronicler's belief. Given the phase of general restoration after the exile, the unusual date of the Passover, the presence of the members of the Kingdom of Israel in Judah, the incomplete restoration of cultic functions, and the overall zeal to rebuild the nation, Hezekiah placed ritualistic omissions in the context of the above extenuating circumstances. He prayed that God would pardon those omissions since the people's intention was to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers (vv. 18-19). God heard Hezekiah's prayer and granted *rapha* to his people (v. 20).

The use of *rapha* in this verse offers several reflections of a theological nature. First of all Hezekiah appears as an agent of the divine *rapha*. As the leader he intercedes on behalf of his people pleading with God. Although the transgression is obvious, Hezekiah sees a greater good in worshipping and turning to God through Passover rituals even without proper preparation. The healing of the people (וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־הָעָם) implies a spiritual aspect, although other biblical contexts suggest that transgressions against God could be punished with

physical illness. It is interesting that *rapha* is used despite the absence of the negative element of disease, disruption, or dysfunction of physical, mental, emotional, or social character. Here, none of these things actually took place. The only element that is negative is people's transgression of the law. Typically, it would be the transgression that leads to a punishment which then requires the action of *rapha*. Yet, this logic is absent in the presently analyzed passage. Here the function of *rapha* is the wiping away of the transgression. In other words it is a spiritual healing, the granting of forgiveness, the justification of the transgressor. While in most cases involving transgression, *rapha* would apply to the restoration of proper functions after the inflicted punishment, for the Chronicler *rapha* goes further back, it dissolves the cause for the punishment.

Summary (Historical Books)

The word *rapha* might be used in reference to inanimate objects such as altar, water, and land. In these cases meaningful translations would include: restore, repair, rebuild, purify, revitalize. In all these instances *rapha* indicates the conclusion of a process of transition from a state of brokenness, destruction, devastation, or contamination to a state of full return to the original proper condition and functioning.

Rapha occurs in instances devoid of immediate theological contexts such as in the restoration of the altar (1 Kgs 18:30). Yet, several theological implications can be deduced from the larger context.

Sometimes the action of *rapha* follows the explicit conversion understood either as sincere repentance (2 Chr 7:14) or abandonment of evil actions because of the fear of punishment or its continuation (1 Sam 6:3). Related to conversion is the expiation exemplified by the guilt offering of the Philistines in 1 Sam 6:3. One can trace elements of spiritual expiation also in penitential mourning of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 20:2-3, although there is no mention of his transgressions in the version offered by 2 Kgs 20.

The restoration brought by the action of *rapha* may take place in connection with the agency of a human being standing between God and another human or object in need of healing. The following examples illustrate this concept: Elisha's purification of waters (2 Kgs 2:21-22), peoples' conversion influencing the revitalization of the land (2 Chr 7:14), Hezekiah's prayer for the people (2 Chr 30:20). The agency involves either direct intercession before God, or moral conversion. But healing may be obtained also after a self-intercessory prayer of the sufferer himself. King Hezekiah exemplifies this concept (2 Kgs 20:2-3).

In some cases there is a double subject of *rapha*; that is, a human being performing signs or symbolic healing gestures and God who sends the healing power. This was seen in the restoration of the waters and the fig cake of Isaiah (2 Kgs 2:21-22; 2 Kgs 20:1-11). In the case of the revitalization of the land, the human contribution to the *rapha* was the conversion, the divine part, instead, consisted in the direct healing action of the land.

Rapha can indicate the process of self-healing of the human body as in the case of Joram (2 Kgs 8:29). Since Joram was deeply immersed in religious infidelity, his healing remains only a never-materialized desire. The text, however, does not explicitly link unfaithfulness with the failure to achieve natural healing of wounds. This can be postulated only from the larger context of Joram's deeds and his violent death that put an end to any hope of healing. Following this reasoning, God would be the remote cause, the one who arranged the circumstances in such a way that the healing never took place. Thus, if the premise is valid, God is the one who interrupts the process of natural self-healing for those who did not undergo repentance.

In some instances *rapha* is related to the use of healing remedies such as salt and fig cake (1 Kgs 2:21; 2 Kgs 20:7). It is unclear what produces the healing: the remedies, direct healing action of God, or God restoring through the remedies.

The teaching that God is the only legitimate healer, known from Exod 15:26; Deut 32:39 is reinforced in 2 Chr 16:12 by the explicit disapproval of king Asa's turning to foreign healers. Seeking healing beyond the physical boundaries of the promised land and beyond Yahweh's religious territory indicates a sinful lack of trust in the God of Israel. On the other hand, the God of Israel has both the power to inflict illness and the power of healing over those who do not belong to the people of the covenant (1 Sam 6).

Healing is related to forgiveness. Logically, forgiveness comes after the act of transgression. In 2 Chr 7:13-14 there is a transgression-punishment-

forgiveness-healing sequence. But, in 2 Chr 30 the punishment is absent. After Hezekiah prayed for his people they were forgiven their improper celebration of the Passover and healed from the guilt without suffering any punishment. In this sense, *rapha* assumes the function of wiping away of transgressions, or justification that renders punishment unnecessary.

Analysis of *rapha* in Wisdom Literature

Job 5:18

בט כִּי הוּא יִכְאֹיֵב וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ יָמָיו (וַיִּדְוֶה) תִּרְפֶּינָה:

For He inflicts pain, and binds up; He wounds and His hands heal.

The only verbal instance of *rapha* in the Book of Job comes in the lengthy first speech of Eliphaz (Job 4-5). The verse is a synonymous parallelism where the meaning of the first part of the verse is expressed in similar terms in the second part of the same verse. Thus, “he inflicts pain and he binds up” (וַיַּחֲבֹשׁ וַיִּכְאֹיֵב) in 5:18a is alternatively stated by “he wounds and his hands heal” (תִּרְפֶּינָה וַיִּמְחֵן וַיִּדְוֶה) in 5:18b. Divine activity in regards to human beings ranges from inflicting pain (כָּאֵב) and wounding (מָחַן) on the one extreme and binding up (חָבַשׁ) the wounds and healing (רָפָא) on the other extreme. The parallelism illustrates also the semantic affinity between binding up and healing. Despite the image of physical treatment of the wounded body expressed by *chabash*, it is unnecessary to confine the use of *rapha* in Job 5:18 to physical curing only. Other verbs (מָחַן,

קָאָב) accompanying *rapha* in v. 18 extend their semantic range to physical, mental, emotional and figurative meanings of healing.¹¹

The teaching about God wounding and healing has been seen in many other cases, of which Deut 32:39 is the most representative example. The main theological thrust of the verse is the idea that both the misfortune and the recovery come from God. This is the theology of Job's friends. For Job, this explanation is inadequate to explain the suffering of the innocent. Job's dissatisfaction with the traditional theological picture will be expressed in 13:4, which will be analyzed next.

Job 13:4

וְאוֹלָם אַתֶּם טִפְלֵי־שָׁקֶר רִפְאֵי אֱלֹל כְּלֶכֶם:

And yet, you smear with lies; physicians of naught all of you.

The word *rapha* in its participial form occurs in the phrase אֱלֹל כְּלֶכֶם: רִפְאֵי, roughly translated as “all you worthless physicians.” The Qal participle of *rapha* in connection with אֱלֹל, *insufficiency, worthlessness*, offers no particular theological reflections. One should notice, nevertheless, that the word רִפְאֵים, is taken here in a figurative sense. Still, it implies that physicians were known to the writer's contemporaries as existing and as exercising their skills. This certainly marks a transition period between the time when God was the only legitimate healer (2 Chr 16) and the time when physicians were sanctioned as God's healing agents in the deuterocanonical literature of Sirach 38.

¹¹ For קָאָב see BDB, 563; for קָאָב see BDB, 456; and for קָבֵשׁ see BDB, 289-90.

Job's third reply to his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) provides the context for the presently analyzed verse 4. The writer makes a reference to all those whose explanations of innocent suffering and misfortune identify with the theology of Job's friends. This theology presupposes the typical pattern seen in many, although not all, *rapha* passages where the punishment for transgressions becomes a necessary step leading to healing. According to this view God plays an active role at two crucial points: smiting and restoring. This theological reasoning works fine with the evidence or a suspicion of human transgression. The importance of the Book of Job lies in the challenge to this commonly accepted theological pattern. Job considers himself innocent of any transgression and his suffering makes no sense within the pattern of a traditional theological application of *rapha*.

Ps 6:3

חַנּוּנִי יְהוָה כִּי אֲמַלֵּל אֲנִי רַפְּאֵנִי יְהוָה כִּי נִבְהַל עַצְמִי:

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am pining away; Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are dismayed.

Psalm 6:3 offers an example of a synonymous parallelism where the second part of the verse expands the meaning of the first part. For this purpose the writer uses similar terms expressing nearly the same concept. Thus, the state of being weak (אֲמַלֵּל) is paralleled with the image of dismayed bones (נִבְהַל). Similarly, *rapha* is paired with being gracious (חַנּוּן). Although the presence of bones insinuates physical context for the action of *rapha*, the healing verb is not limited to the physical dimension only. The bones (עַצְמִי) may also indicate the substance, self, or represent the entire person. In poetry, the bones (עַצְמִי) can be

interpreted as the seat of disease and pain.¹² Consequently, in addition to the physical aspect, *rapha* in this verse can relate also to emotional, spiritual, and mental restoration.

Ps 30:3

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שׁוֹעֲתִי אֵלַיךְ וַתִּרְפָּאֵנִי:

O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you healed me.

The verb *rapha* occurs in the context of self-intercession expressed by שׁוֹעַ, *cry for help*. The overall tone of the psalm expresses thanksgiving for deliverance. It mentions “lifting up” of the psalmist, not letting his enemies rejoice over him, and being brought up from Sheol (vv. 1-4). Although it is hard to determine the nature of the healing, it is important to notice that *rapha* occurs here in the context of self-intercession. The combination of self-intercession and *rapha* is rather rare in the Hebrew Bible¹³

Rapha illustrates only one way in which God may choose to respond to the supplicant. In other places (Pss 40:2; 88:14; Jonah 2:2; Hab 1:2) the expected response to the verb שׁוֹעַ, *cry for help* is שָׁמַע, *to hear*. The oppressed person cries for help and God either hears or does not hear the cry or the invocation. Both *shama* and *rapha* as the divine response to human crying for help express the graciousness of God’s action of hearing or healing. God chooses to hear or to heal the psalmist, but he could also refuse to do so.

¹² See *BDB*, 782-83.

¹³ Other examples of self-intercession in relation to *rapha* are seen in the healing of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 20:1-11, and that of Jeremiah in Jer 17:14.

Ps 41:5

אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי יְהוָה חַנּוּן רַפָּאָה נַפְשִׁי כִּי־חָטָאתִי לָךְ:

As for me, I said, O Lord, be gracious to me; Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

Psalm 41 has received various classifications: “Psalm of illness,” “A liturgy for the sick,” “Thanksgiving after sickness,” etc.¹⁴ The elements of illness, distress, prayer for help, mentioning of foes, deserting friends, and personal sinfulness resemble the motifs found in Psalms 6 and 38. As seen above, Ps 6 also contains the word *rapha*. The presently analyzed verse 4 is an explicit prayer for divine healing (רַפָּאָה נַפְשִׁי), parallel to the one found in Ps 6:3 (רַפְּאֵנִי יְהוָה). The request to heal the soul (נַפֶּשׁ) of the psalmist points to the restoration of the most-inner part of who he is, his substance, his seat of emotions and passions according to the meaning of *nephesh*.¹⁵ This certainly gives a spiritual and emotional character to the restoring force of *rapha*. Yet, the expression “bed of sickness” (עֶרֶשׂ דָּוִי) in the preceding verse 4 suggests physical sickness as well. On this basis one could argue that in this psalm the process of *rapha* signifies a holistic, spiritual and physical restoration.

In both Psalms 6 and 41, *rapha* is expressed in its Qal imperative form. It is wrapped with the elements of dissociation from evildoers, and the description of the psalmist’s lamentable condition. But Ps 41:5 carries an additional element. It is an explicit acknowledgment of a committed sin (כִּי־חָטָאתִי לָךְ). Personal sin, as

¹⁴ Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (Word Biblical Commentary 19; Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 319.

¹⁵ BDB, 659-61.

a (or the) cause of illness, can be inferred also from Ps 6:2 that mentions divine anger (אַף) and wrath (חֵמָה) which result from a transgression against God.¹⁶

While in Psalm 6 the compelling reasons in requesting divine *rapha* are both the miserable condition of the psalmist (I am pining away, my bones are dismayed) and the divine mercy (חֶסֶד), in Ps 41:5,11 there is only one reason to ask for the healing action, namely, the divine graciousness (חֵנּוּן).

Ps 60:4

הִרְעַשְׁתָּהּ אֶרֶץ פְּצַמְתָּהּ רָפָה שְׁבִרְיָהּ כִּי־מָטָה:

You have caused the land to tremble, you have broken it, Heal its breaches, for it has moved.

The psalm seems to be expressing the complaint of the people during the time of military and political humiliation as it unrolls a fervent request for divine assistance.¹⁷ Verse 4 holds God responsible for making the land quake (אֶרֶץ הִרְעַשְׁתָּהּ) and for splitting it open (פְּצַמְתָּהּ). Then, He is asked to restore the land's breaches (רָפָה שְׁבִרְיָהּ). It is interesting that the MT uses the Qal imperative of רָפָה, *to sink, relax*, instead of the expected רָפָא, *to heal*. The Greek translation, however, seems to read רָפָא, since it comes with its usual equivalent ἰάομαι, in its imperative aorist middle form ἰασαί. The BHS apparatus informs us that a few manuscripts have in their texts רָפָא.¹⁸ Fortunately, the choice between רָפָה, and

¹⁶ The Book of Psalms makes a direct connection between transgression and illness in Ps 107:17.

¹⁷ See Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (Word Biblical Commentary 20; Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1990), 103.

¹⁸ BHS, 1141.

רפא is of limited importance in this case. As M. Tate suggests, the presence of רפה, implies the idea of cracks in the earth caused by an earthquake. These are the cracks that with divine help would sink down into the earth.¹⁹ From this perspective, both verbs רפה and רפא would indicate the restoration of the land to its previous condition. It appears to me that by placing the verb רפא in the text one would opt for a restoration from a military destruction. On the other hand, if one retains רפה as the legitimate textual component then the verb would imply a restoration from a natural land disturbance caused perhaps by an earthquake.

The theological outlook of the psalm has God as the only agent standing behind the action of the verb. Yet, his divine action of restoration is prompted by people's prayerful request. In this sense people play the role of an immediate agent of restoration on behalf of the land. Thus, in regards to the people the word agent has an instrumental character. Through their prayerful agency they activate the forces of divine restoration. On the other hand God is the remote agent of the verb *rapha*. In this case the term agent needs to be understood as the one who acts on his own behalf or the grammatical subject of the verb to act. In other words, God is the agent of the force of the verb *rapha*. Unlike the people who activate and put into motion the action of *rapha*, God is the active source who dispatches the restorative energy.

Ps 103:3

הַסֵּלֶם לְכָל־עֲוֹנוֹתַי הָרַפָּא לְכָל־תַּחֲלָאוֹתַי:

Who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.

¹⁹ Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 101.

Psalm 103 praises numerous aspects of divine goodness. Verse 3 suggests that God heals all the diseases (תִּרְפָּא לְכָל־תַּחֲלָאִים). The word diseases (תַּחֲלָאִים) relates to physical but also figurative diseases, such as disease of the land, a plague, etc.²⁰ It is important to notice that this divine healing encompasses all (כָּל) diseases. This continues and reinforces the already familiar theme of God being the only healer of the Israelites. If תַּחֲלָאִים is taken in various senses – physical, spiritual, emotional, and figurative – then the restoring and transforming power of God is also related to all the areas of human life, or at least the life of his faithful ones. This transforming action of the divine *rapha* means either the restoration of a properly intended state of being and functionality or sometimes a simple assurance of the continuation of such a state or functionality.

The healing of all diseases stands as a parallel to forgiving all iniquities (הַסֵּלֶם לְכָל־עֲוֹנוֹי). As in the case of diseases, here also it is God who can forgive all (כָּל) iniquities. It is in the spirit of Psalms and the larger context of biblical theology that healing is related to forgiveness of sins. Similarly, the forgiveness is conditioned by the confession of one's iniquities as it is clearly outlined in Ps 32:5. On the basis of the text of Ps 103:3 one could argue that forgiveness and healing are intrinsically connected. In other words, healing depends on forgiveness. From the sequence of the words one sees that this verse speaks

²⁰ See Deut 29:21 and BDB, 316.

first about forgiveness and then healing. This would suggest a logical relationship based on a cause/effect connection. Thus, divine forgiveness produces divine healing. Yet, the approach of a cause/effect relationship is neither necessary nor an essential part of a parallelism as such. Modern study of rhetorical figures allows biblical parallelism to "be seen as adding new information, containing an intensification or a progression, rather than just going over old material in new words."²¹ From this perspective we may understand forgiveness and healing as synonymous theological concepts although preserving independent identity. God's healing is similar to divine forgiveness to the extent that the expansion of the divine forgiveness leads to divine healing. In his commentary on Psalm 103, L. C. Allen put it simply: "healing is a tangible result of divine forgiveness."²²

Ps 107:20

יְשַׁלַּח דְּבָרוֹ וַיִּרְפָּאֵם וַיַּמְלֵט מִשְׁחִיתוֹתָם:

He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Psalm 107 celebrates God's saving power for those in various kinds of distress sometimes caused by their own choice. After the afflicted ones called to the Lord (Ps 107:6,13,19, 28) he would rescue them from their peril. The verb *rapha* occurs in the section marked by Ps 107:17-20. Verse 17 informs that the fools (אֱוִלִּים) because of their way of transgression (פֶּשַׁע), and their iniquities (עֲוֹן),

²¹ Adele Berlin, "Parallelism," *ABD*, 5:155.

²² Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101-150* (Word Biblical Commentary 21; Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1983), 18.

became afflicted (עָנָה). This establishes a connection between the concepts of transgression and affliction. The intensity of affliction is compared to being brought to the gates of death (עַד-שַׁעְרֵי מוֹת) in verse 18. The next verse says that they cried to the Lord in their trouble (צָר) and he saved (יָשַׁע) them from their distress (מִצְוִקָה). From verse 20, we learn that God sent forth the word (דְּבַר) to heal them (רָפָא) and snatched them (קָלַט) from their pit (שְׁחִית).

The entire psalm has religious and ethical themes. It is not possible to determine whether the affliction (עָנָה) of the fools in Ps 107:17 refers to physical illness.²³ Consequently, the verb *rapha* in verse 20 may or may not mean physical healing. On the other hand, it certainly means restoration from the negative state illustrated by several negative terms in Ps 107:17-20. This restoration is mostly of a spiritual nature, yet it might include physical healing as well.

Psalm 107 presents the word of God as an effective agent of the divine healing. The connection between the action of *rapha* and human agents or natural remedies have been attested before. Although in other places the results of *rapha* are often preceded by abstract concepts such as conversion and repentance, it is for the first time here in Ps 107 that an abstract concept of divine word serves as a direct means of healing. The action of the word comes in response to the faith-based plea and the self-intercession of the people. Although the nature of the word is spiritual, the divine healing accomplished

²³ The verb עָנָה means *being bowed down, depressed, humbled, afflicted, and to humble oneself*. See *BDB*, 778.

through the word can restore all levels of human life. The healing which God performs through his word is compared to snatching, rescuing and saving from the peril or the pit. It is a classical example in the Hebrew Bible where the idea of healing and saving, or salvation have become synonymous.

There are other instances where the word (דְּבַר) of God plays the role of an agent. The word carrying out divine command appears in Ps 147:15 which states "He sends forth His command (אִמְרָה) to the earth; His word (דְּבַר) runs very speedily." Isaiah 55:11 mentions a similar agency of the divine word accomplishing God's will on earth.²⁴

There is a difference between human agents executing or mediating divine *rapha* and the word of God accomplishing healing. As an agent or a divine instrument, the word bypasses the material dimension; it is detectable only through the faith of the believer. In contrast, human agents and natural healing remedies belong to the tangible world of the senses. Additionally, the word appears to function as an expression or manifestation of the divine will generating healing results instantly. From this perspective there is no substantial difference between God and his word. Consequently, the instrumentality of the word, or its agency, belongs to the sphere of symbolism and metaphor. Human agents, on the other hand, retain their separate individuality, the power of

²⁴ In his commentary, Leslie Allen opposes dependence of Ps 107:20 on Isaiah 55:11 saying "the primary reference seems to be to a priestly oracle of healing... brought from the holy place to the enquirer or his proxy waiting in the temple court." Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 59. Although this may be correct on the literary level, there is a clear theological connection between the cited texts when taken from the perspective of the entire Hebrew Bible.

intercession, mediation, and their own discretion when appealing to God for the power of *rapha*.

Ps 147:3

הָרַפָּא לְשִׁבּוּרֵי לֵב וּמַחְבֵּשׁ לְעַצְבוֹתָם:

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147 praises God through two interwoven themes: His “power in the sphere of nature, both as creator and controller, and his patronage of the covenant people, demonstrated in recent history specifically and in the general attitude of grace.”²⁵ Verse 3 carries figurative spiritual contents inserted into the frame composed of words related to physical healing. God heals (רָפָא) those who have broken (שָׁבַר) hearts and binds up (חָבַשׁ) their wounds (עַצְבָּה). The use of the word heart (לֵב) in the expression brokenhearted clarifies that the action of the verb *rapha* is directed toward the inner man comprising the mind, affections and will.²⁶ Consequently, the verse speaks about the healing of spiritual and emotional spheres as well as mental and will-related aspects of a human being. The subsequent use of a curative illustration of binding up of the wounds reinforces the idea that all these areas – spirit, emotions, mind and will – are vulnerable and may be wounded just like the physical body. This points out the holistic nature of the theological employment of *rapha*. The action of *rapha* goes

²⁵ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 309.

²⁶ BDB, 524-25.

beyond mere physical healing; it permeates the entire human being with all its functions.

Ecc 3:3

עַתָּה לַהֲרוֹג וְעַתָּה לְרַפֹּא עַתָּה לִפְרוֹץ וְעַתָּה לִבְנוֹת:

A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build up.

This verse presents a combination of four parallelisms expressed by four verbs in the Qal infinitive constructs (לַהֲרוֹג, לְרַפֹּא, לִפְרוֹץ, לִבְנוֹת). These four parallelisms come from four different combinations of the verbs. There are two antithetic parallelisms identical with the wording of verse 3:

1. A time to kill (עַתָּה לַהֲרוֹג) and a time to heal (וְעַתָּה לְרַפֹּא)
2. A time to tear down (עַתָּה לִפְרוֹץ) and a time to build up (וְעַתָּה לִבְנוֹת)

There are also two synthetic parallelisms based on the meaning of the verbs:

1. A time to kill (עַתָּה לַהֲרוֹג) and a time to tear down (עַתָּה לִפְרוֹץ)
2. A time to heal (וְעַתָּה לְרַפֹּא) and a time to build up (וְעַתָּה לִבְנוֹת)

In the antithetic parallelism *rapha* is contrasted with killing (הָרַג). In the synthetic parallelism *rapha* is paired with building (בָּנָה). This shows that in the mind of the biblical writer the action of *rapha* was opposite to the meaning of killing and synonymous with the meaning of building. Even though verse 3 offers undeniable wisdom insights for daily life it has limited theological implications. If there is any theological connotation to *rapha* in Ecc 3:3 it would be about the

proper time for divine healing. In other words, it is God who decides when his healing will take place. The effects of divine *rapha*, on the one hand, cannot be prompted or accelerated by human beings; on the other hand, nothing and nobody can derail the divine plan or timing for the restoration.

Summary (Wisdom Literature)

The action of the verb *rapha* goes beyond physical healing when directed at such objects as heart, soul, and bones. It points to the restoration of the inner person, or one's substance, and self. This means that *rapha* may include either one or all of the following restorations: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. That gives to *rapha* a holistic character of healing. Essentially, one can argue that in agreement with Psalms, *rapha* can be applied to any kind of human dysfunction that needs to be repaired. According to the expectation of the believer and the divine discretion the action of *rapha* has the potential to permeate the entire human being with all its functions.

The restoring power of *rapha* in some instances comes as a response to an explicit request, a self-intercession offered by the person in need. It can be an explicit prayer for healing as in Ps 6:2; 41:4 or a general prayer for help where the answer comes in the form of healing, as in Ps 30:2.

The release of the force of *rapha* may be related to the intercession of a third person. In this case the agent of healing mediates between God and the

sufferer pleading for restoration. This is illustrated by the prayers of the people for the divine restoration of the land in Ps 60:4.

The concept of the word of God being an agent of the divine healing, illustrates the idea of a spiritual healing agency operating in the realm of faith and through faith. It is beyond the sphere of human senses. In some ways the word of God identifies with the divine will and thus God himself. This also explains the efficacious and speedy results of divine *rapha* since it issues directly from God, the source of healing.

Revitalization (*rapha*) of the land illustrates the use of the healing verb regarding inanimate objects. This restoration, however, has a moral conditioning, it depends on people's returning to good standing before God.

The healing action of *rapha* is related to forgiveness of transgressions as it is emphasized in Ps 103:3. There is a double relationship between forgiveness and healing. First, forgiveness appears as a prerequisite, a necessary preceding step toward healing.²⁷ Second, forgiveness and healing are synonymous concepts in the sense that healing is the expression of the fullness of forgiveness.

Wisdom literature reiterates the teaching that God both wounds and heals (Job 5:18; Ps 60:4). Repentance is conditional for the action of *rapha*, although not in all biblical examples. The repentance involves acknowledgment of

²⁷ The idea of forgiveness as the prerequisite for healing is maintained also by Gerhard Hasel. He argues, following J. J. Stamm, that "the themes of healing, forgiveness, and salvation are not (and cannot be) separated in Scripture. Healing involves not merely physical restoration; it includes the deeper dimension of forgiveness and restoration into fellowship with God." Gerhard Hasel, "Health and Healing in the Old Testament," 201.

committed sins (Ps 41:5), and dissociation from the company of evildoers (Ps 6:8).

In asking for divine healing one can offer two kinds of reasons related to and even dependent on each other. The first reason is the miserable condition of the sufferer invoking God's compassion (Ps 6:2-3). The second is the appeal to the divine mercy and graciousness understood as personal attributes of Yahweh. Reminding God about his compassionate character should motivate him sufficiently, as the Psalmist believes, to restore the sufferer to health (Ps 41:5,11). The two reasons are related because lamenting about one's miserable condition is useless if there is no divine mercy that could remedy the problem. On the other hand, divine mercy or graciousness becomes meaningless if there is no object to which it could be granted.

Analysis of *rapha* in Isaiah

Isa 6:10

הַשְׁמִן לִב־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְאָזְנוֹ הַכֹּפֶר וְעֵינָיו הַשֹּׁעַ
פֶּן־יִרְאֶה בְּעֵינָיו וּבְאָזְנוֹ יִשְׁמָע וּלְבָבוֹ יָבִין וְשָׁב וּרְפָא לוֹ:

Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.

In chapter 6 the Book of Isaiah describes the vision and the call of its protagonist. An important function of its narrative is to "justify to his contemporaries the prophet's teaching, unpopular as it might be."²⁸ Isaiah's

²⁸ Joseph Jensen and William Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," *NJBC*, 234.

mission consists in proclaiming the divine word despite people's refusal to accept it. It is their spiritual resistance that renders people's hearts insensitive, ears dull, and eyes dim to the point that the whole prophetic message becomes ineffective. For this reason, despite their hearing they will not understand, convert (שוב) and be healed (רפא). The word *rapha* is used in connection with a conversion verb, return (שוב). The presence of the conjunctive *waw* before *rapha* clarifies that the text speaks about returning to God and being healed as two independent coordinated actions. In this sense conversion is more of a preceding phase rather than a requirement for healing.

Isa 19:22

וְנָגַף יְהוָה אֶת־מִצְרַיִם נֶגֶף וְרָפָא וְשָׁבוּ עַד־יְהוָה וְנִעֲתַר לָהֶם וְרָפָאָם:

The Lord will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the Lord, and he will respond to them and will heal them.

In chapters 13-23, the Book of Isaiah presents oracles against foreign nations. The entire chapter 19 is focused on Egypt. Verses 19-22 speak about God manifesting himself to the Egyptians, being known and worshipped by the Egyptians, freeing them from oppression and healing them. The word *rapha* is used twice in verse 22. First it occurs in connection with God's striking (נָגַף) and then healing (רָפָא) Egypt. The purpose of striking is to induce conversion that would result in healing. The second employment of *rapha* comes with the prediction that after the Egyptian return (שוב) to the Lord he will heal them (רָפָא). The medicinal use of smiting in order to induce conversion and then procure

healing has been seen in other cases, although never in such an intense and explicit way. What is the most interesting is that God will manifest himself showing compassion and healing to pagans. The action of *rapha* directed towards Egyptians cannot be seen as an isolated instance of divine favor that accidentally leaped over Israel's boundaries. Rather, the action of *rapha* descends upon the Egyptians who already have become converted to God, knowing and worshipping him. From this perspective, although they are not the same as the people of Israel, they have turned out to be God's people. Thus, *rapha* is granted no longer to pagans, per se, but to the people who worship and fulfill their vows to the Lord. The spiritual and religious meaning of *rapha* is far-reaching. Once a true conversion has taken place, God's healing powers transcend the ethnic boundaries of Israel.

Isa 30:26

וְהָיָה אֹרֶחַּ הַלְבֵנָה כְּאֹרֶחַ הַחֶמֶשׁ וְאֹרֶחַ הַחֶמֶשׁ יְהִיָּה שִׁבְעָתַיִם
כְּאֹרֶחַ שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים בַּיּוֹם חִבֵּשׁ יִהְיֶה אֶת־שִׁבְרָא עֲמוֹ וּמִחֵץ מִכְתּוֹ יִרְפָּא:

The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the Lord binds up the fracture of his people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.

Isaiah 30:23-26 talks about Zion's future prosperity that will coincide with the day of the Lord's judgment.²⁹ God will make the earth productive with streams of running water and plentiful vegetation. This is also the day when the Lord will bind up the wounds (חִבֵּשׁ יִהְיֶה אֶת־שִׁבְרָא), and heal the bruises (וּמִחֵץ מִכְתּוֹ יִרְפָּא)

²⁹ The day of the Lord (אֶת־יוֹם יְהוָה) or "that day" appears also in Isa 2:6-22 and Amos 5:18-20. It is a universal day of retribution often described in terms of natural phenomena such as fire, storm, and earthquake. For Isaiah this is an event that will take place in history and not at the end of the world. See Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 232.

of his people (Isa 30:26). The theme of restoration of God's people is parallel to the restoration of nature. The motif of binding up (חָבַשׁ) the wounds is seen also in other biblical places (Job 5:18; Ezek 34:4; Hos 6:1). God will heal the bruises (שָׁבַר) that he himself inflicted upon his people. This reminds us of the medicinal purpose of the divinely sent misfortune as already seen in other healing passages. The use of *rapha* in this verse is placed in a universalistic and spiritual framework of restoration. At the same time the process of restoration indicated by *rapha* is accompanied by general destruction seen as the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall (בְּיוֹם הָרֶגַע רֹב בְּנֵי מִגְדָּלִים), v. 25. Parallel descriptions in Isa 2:6-22 inform us that the divine judgment will terrorize not only the unfaithful ones of his people but also the pagans. It is the judgment against human pride, arrogance and idols (Isa 2:12,17,18). Although the annihilation of Yahweh's adversaries will result in the state of universal restoration (*rapha*), the only explicitly mentioned beneficiaries of the divine healing are the Israelites (v. 26). One may observe two issues regarding the universality of the event. First, it is evident from the text that the judgment goes beyond the boundaries of Israel, encompassing other nations, and thus it is universal. Secondly, the universality of the restoration regards only nature and the people of God, apparently excluding pagan nations. It is important to notice that the healing on such a large scale relates to the destruction of ungodly forces of equally impressive size. From the ethical perspective the healing is linked here to the elimination of evil understood as practices or attitudes unacceptable to God. This leads us to the observation that the word *rapha* acquires in Isaiah a new, eschatological

dimension. It might be correct to say that Isaiah understood such a restoration in historical terms,³⁰ yet the idea of eliminating evil and restoring things to the original divine plan unmistakably points toward the last days of this world.

Isa 53:5

וְהוּא מִחֻלָּל מִפְשָׁעֵינוּ מִדָּכָא מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו
וּבְחִבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ:

But he was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed.

The figure of the Servant of Yahweh appears in Isaiah 49-53. He is the one who makes the expiation of sin and performs the spiritual liberation of Israel through his own suffering. The entire chapter 53 uses very intense illustrations of pain and suffering befalling the Servant. In verses 3-4 the Servant is said to be a man of suffering (מְכָאֹב), who endured pain (מְכָאֹב) on behalf of the people, and bore their infirmity (חֲלִי). He was pierced (חֻלַּל) for people's offenses (פְּשָׁע), and crushed (דָּכָא) for their iniquities (עֲוֹן) as we learn in v. 5. By his voluntary suffering the Servant of Yahweh bore the sins of many (חַטֹּאתֵי רַבִּים), v. 12. He also interceded for the transgressors (וּלְפֹשְׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ). It is made explicit that God laid upon his servant the guilt of his people (עֲוֹן), v. 6, and smitten him for their transgressions (פְּשָׁע), v. 8. Despite the innocence of the Servant (v. 9), God was pleased to crush him (וַיַּחֲזֶה דָּכֵן דָּכָאוּ), v. 10. The giving of the life on the part of the Servant acquires the meaning of a guilt offering (אֲשָׁם), v. 10.

³⁰ Jensen and Irwin, "Isaiah 1-39," 232.

The word *rapha* occurs in verse 5b where the reader learns that the chastisement (מוֹסֵר) of the Servant produced a well-being (שְׁלוֹם) for the people and that by his stripes (חֲבוּרָה) they were healed (רָפָא). The theological implications of this narrative are far-reaching.

First there are some elements already found in other writings of the Hebrew Bible regarding the connection between transgression and punishment. Transgressions (חַטָּא, פֶּשַׁע, עֲוֹן) led to infirmity (חֲלִי) and suffering (מַכְאוֹב). The narrator emphatically states that those were our infirmities and our sufferings (v. 4). The element of expiation is known also from other biblical passages,³¹ and so is the idea of intercession on behalf of others.³² Similarly, divine healing as the closure to the situation of spiritual, social, religious, or physical dysfunction occurs in many other *rapha* contexts.

Second, there are some new elements, unique either by their appearance or their intensity. The most striking is the idea of vicarious voluntary physical suffering leading to the healing of others. Verse 5b can be taken as a synonymous parallelism

His chastisement (מוֹסֵר)	produces	well-being (שְׁלוֹם)
His stripes (חֲבוּרָה)	produce	healing (רָפָא)

³¹ For example when Abimelech and the Philistines offered gifts for the reparation of their transgressions (Gen 20:15; 1 Sam 6:3).

³² Abraham's prayer on behalf of Abimelech and Moses' prayer for Miriam illustrate the element of intercession in the healing passages with *rapha* (Gen 20:17; Num 12:13).

The above parallelism illustrates that the painful experience of the Servant of Yahweh leads to restoration resulting in well-being. Lexically, the verb *rapha* and the noun *shalom* indicate different things. Yet, in this passage there is a theological correlation between the two. *Rapha* means the action leading to the completion of the healing process, the final restoration to the desired state that existed before or at least was intended to be. *Shalom* appears as the result of *rapha*. The word *shalom* can be qualified as the ongoing endurance of the effects of *rapha*. While it is not concerned with the process of restoration per se, it emphasizes the continuity of the good state and proper functionality of the grammatical beneficiary of the action of *rapha*. In some other passages biblical writers use either *rapha* or *marpe* to indicate that state of well-being, when *rapha* and *marpe* are employed in the sense of divine blessing without reference to previous negative states, situations of illness or dysfunction either social, emotional, spiritual or physical.

Another unique element found in Isaiah 53 is that the Servant, although crushed with illness, is innocent on the personal level. Similarities can be traced to various offerings of animals for the expiation of sins of the people where an innocent animal was sacrificed. The comparison drawn between the Servant and a lamb led to slaughter evokes the Paschal ritual of sacrificing a lamb. In any case, the deeper meaning is spiritual; that is, the removal of transgressions that disrupted a proper relationship with God.

The image of God in Isaiah 53 is consistent with most other biblical *rapha* passages. God punishes the transgression by sending infirmities of various

kinds. He uses illness as a medicinal means that should quicken the sick to acknowledge the sin and begin the conversion. Prayer, intercession or expiatory elements may be used to prompt or assure divine healing. Then the healing comes at the end and restores things to their original course. But what is surprising in Isaiah 53 is the intensity of the divine urge to punish the guilt. God delights (יִשְׂמֵחַ), v. 10, in smiting and crushing the innocent Servant. Divine disgust with iniquity takes the form of a violent reaction resulting in extremely harsh punishment of the transgressor that leads to death (מוֹת), v. 12. This intensity of chastisement becomes even more acute when it is realized that the transgressions of many are placed only on one individual who becomes a substitute transgressor even in his innocence. The Servant of Yahweh is a perfect agent of the divine healing. He not only intercedes for the transgressors but also voluntarily submits himself to suffering and death to obtain for them divine pardon and justification. The benefits of *rapha* are granted at the expense of his own wounds.

Finally, one can discern two urges apparent through divine actions that appear to be contradictory. First, there is a compelling drive to punish the transgression and thus to disrupt and destroy what is whole and healthy on a physical, visible or external level. Second, it is a forceful need to grant restoration in the form of the action of *rapha*. This restoration aims first at the spiritual, moral, ethical and internal level but eventually may project itself to physical and external healing. Even though both divine compulsions, a need to punish (destroy) and a need to heal (restore), seem contradictory they coexist in

the biblical pattern of transgression-punishment-conversion-restoration. From this perspective the divine application of striking with illness and destruction, as paradoxical as it seems, is the early stage of the restoration process that becomes final with the issuing of the force of *rapha*. A form critical observation can be made at this point. Theologically, Yahweh's healing and restoration does not begin with the action of *rapha*. Instead, it is preceded by other stages, disruptive and destructive ones. Thus, the action of *rapha*, strictly speaking, involves only the final stage of the restoration or healing. Conversely, the process of healing or restoration starts even before the action of *rapha* is put into motion. It can be detected already in the process of divinely sent illness, destruction or misfortune.

Isa 57:18-19

18 דַּרְכָּיו רָאִיתִי וְאַרְפָּאֵהוּ וְאַנְחָהוּ וְאַשְׁלֵם נַחֲמִים לוֹ וְלֹאֲבָלָיו:

19 בּוֹרָא (נוֹב) [נִיב] שְׁפָתַיִם שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְרִחּוֹק וְלִקְרֹב אָמַר יְהוָה וְרַפָּאתָיו:

18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners. 19 Creating the praise of the lips. peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him.

Isaiah 57:14-21 speaks about the divine comfort for the afflicted faithful ones. God manifests himself as the one who revives the spirits of the dejected and the hearts of the crushed (v. 15). His anger and striking was caused by people's avarice (בָּצַע), iniquity (עֲוֹן) and unwillingness to convert by persisting in their own ways (v. 17), yet the divine wrath will not last forever (v 16). Despite their evil ways God promises healing (רָפָא), guidance (נָחָה) and restoration of comfort (נַחֲמִים) in verse 18. In verse 19, healing (רָפָא), is accompanied by the

promise of well-being and peace (שלום). The text uses the third person singular masculine, thus speaking of the collective nation of Israel as him.

In addition to the typical pattern of transgression-punishment-healing, one may notice divine justification of anger and punishment, namely, the rebellious way of the people. Both *rapha* and *shalom* will be bestowed upon the faithful ones after their medicinal ordeal is over. The wicked (רשע) however, will not take part either in healing or in peace; there is no *shalom* for the wicked (Isa 57:20-21).

Summary (Isaiah)

Whether a healing takes place depends on several factors. From Isa 6:10 one infers that the unwillingness to convert, that is to change one's present conduct, prevents the understanding of messages calling for reform. In other words, those who are content with their sinful life will miss the reasons for the internal transformation (*shuv*) no matter how clear or obvious the message is. It is their own internal disposition that prevents them from conversion (*shuv*). Since conversion appears to be a necessary step before healing they exclude themselves also from healing by resisting the notion of personal transformation. Isaiah explicitly connects *shuv*, the action of returning to God with the subsequent *rapha*, the action of healing. While it is God who powers the action of *rapha*, it is an individual, a human being, who puts into motion the power of *shuv*. Presented with the fact of human conversion God has no means to

restrain his healing force. Thus, the healing of a sick individual depends on both human and divine action. The divine action may be taken for granted, it is always available, as long as the human part is done, i.e., the conversion. This means that the effectiveness of the divine healing depends totally on the human transformation. The internal personal change (*shuv*, conversion, transformation) assures two subsequent steps leading to full restoration (*rapha*). First, it activates the divine healing power. Second, it opens spiritual channels through which this healing power can reach and restore the sick.

The noun *shalom* may accompany the action of the verb *rapha* (Isa 53:5; 57:18). Both words refer to divine benefits granted to believers. In Isa 53 *rapha* and *shalom* are the benefits obtained from vicarious suffering of the Servant of Yahweh.

The use of *rapha* comes with the idea of universal restoration preceded by universal judgment (Isa 30:26). The judgment indicates the destruction of the illness consisting in disregard for God's law and everything that it entails. The destruction assumes the character of a forceful healing after admonitions and persuasions have failed. There is no element of conversion in this kind of healing. It is a unilateral action of God intended to eradicate evil and restore things to their proper nature and functionality. Although Isaiah might have envisioned the judgment and the restoration in temporary categories, there are some indications that the definitive healing will have an eschatological character.

Isaiah reiterates and elaborates the teaching about God wounding in order to produce restoration (Deut 32:39). The healing of the Egyptians in Isa 19:22

represents the case where God applies the same procedure of wounding and healing to pagans as he usually does to his people. The final goal of striking is to induce conversion leading to the healing of the Egyptians understood as the adherence to the only true God. This is the ultimate meaning of the spiritual aspect of the action of *rapha*: the establishment or re-creation of harmony and unity with God. Isaiah believes that the Hebrew deity is actively interested in bestowing the benefits of *rapha* beyond Israel. Thus, even pagans may enter into a harmonious relationship with God as long as they come to him through conversion (Isa 66:17-23).

The image of the Servant of Yahweh (Isa 53), a perfect agent of the divine healing, introduces a series of theological implications related to the verb *rapha*. Among these are: vicarious voluntary physical suffering of the innocent, expiation for the sins of many, intercession for transgressors, and sacrificing one's life for the justification, healing, and well-being of others. For Isaiah, the physical pain of an innocent person can serve as a remedy for the spiritual illness of many. The pain obliterates the guilt of transgression.

Isaiah 53 brings forth two intense urges residing in God; punishing and healing. Both desires find their place in the biblical process of transgression-punishment-conversion-restoration. It is a theological pattern. What precedes transgression is the original state of health (well-being) or proper function as it was divinely intended or at least acceptable. When transgression disrupts this original state of health, then medicinal punishment follows. It is supposed to induce repentance either heart-felt or just because of a mere fear of punishment.

As seen in other *rapha* passages, repentance may be accompanied by intercession of an agent of healing, expiatory practices, or self-intercession. Eventually, the divine healing is granted and things are restored to their good original pattern of being or functioning. Thus a more complete cycle can be seen as: health-disruption-punishment-repentance-restoration-health. From this perspective the desire of punishing relates closely to the desire of healing. The ultimate meaning of both desires is to have people healthy, namely living in well-being, harmony and closeness to Yahweh.

Analysis of *rapha* in Jeremiah

Jer 3:22

שובו בָּנִים שׁוֹבְבִים אֶרְפָּה מְשׁוֹבְחֵיכֶם הִנְנוּ אֲתָנוּ לָךְ כִּי אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ:
Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness. Behold, we come to you; for you are the Lord our God.

The fragment of Jeremiah 3:19-25 illustrates theological interaction between human conversion and divine restoration. God's original desire to treat the people of Israel as his children (v. 19) was countered with people's unfaithfulness (v. 20), perversion (עָוָה) and the forgetfulness of God (v. 21). In this situation of religious and ethical dissension God made a call for conversion (שוב) to his rebellious children so that he could cure (רָפָא) their apostasy (מְשׁוּבָה), (v. 22). The text says that people promptly returned to God (v. 22), acknowledging him as the only salvation (תְּשׁוּעָה) of Israel (v. 23). They admitted both their sins against God (כִּי לִיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ חָטָאנוּ אֲנִיחֵנוּ), and not listening to his voice (בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ) since the days of their fathers (v. 25).

This fragment presents an idealistic situation where people speedily recognize their transgression and return to God. It is important to notice that the action of *rapha* is not directed toward the people but toward their unfaithfulness (משוכה). Although in the final analysis the fragment is about the healing of the people, the text itself points to the restoration of an ethical religious quality, or rather the lack of thereof, namely *meshubah*. The word *meshubah* has a negative meaning of turning away from God and it is the opposite of being faithful. It is this negative concept that illustrates the condition of the people. Negative concepts of various kinds occur in many other verses with *rapha* and even constitute a sort of pre-condition, or assumption of existence of a negative state that needs to be transformed. Typically, it is either sickness that needs to concede to health or other states of dysfunction that must be returned to their original functionality. The same theological concepts of healing apostasy (משוכתם), although with an alternative spelling, is found in Hosea 14:5.

Jer 6:14; 8:11

וַיִּרְפְּאוּ אֶת-שִׁבְרֵי עַמִּי עַל-נִקְלָה לֵאמֹר שָׁלוֹם שָׁלוֹם וְאֵין שָׁלוֹם:

They have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, saying, peace, peace, but there is no peace.

In the general situation of people's wrongdoing (v. 10) and impending divine castigation (v.11) the prophets and the priests falsely assure people of peace (vv. 13-14). Their unfounded and misleading utterances heal (רָפָא) the fracture (שִׁבְרֵי) of the people only slightly, as the adverbial phrase עַל-נִקְלָה,

suggests.³³ The ineffectiveness of this human healing is caused by the lack of true repentance that people are unable to attain because of the false, soothing teaching of the prophets and priests. Thus, the connection between *rapha* and the proclamation of *shalom* in v. 14 is sarcastic. For Jeremiah there is no peace and there is no healing without elimination of iniquity and conversion to God.

Jeremiah 8:11 is a doublet of 6:14 with the difference that *אֶת־שִׁבְרִי עָמִי*, “the brokenness of my people becomes” *אֶת־שִׁבְרִי בַת־עָמִי*, “the brokenness of the daughter of my people.” In Jeremiah “daughter of my people” (*בַּת־עָמִי*) designates Jerusalem.³⁴ The overall meaning of *rapha*, whether referring to people or daughter of my people, remains the same.

Jer 8:22

הֲצָרִי אֵין בְּגִלְעָד אִם־רֹפֵא אֵין שָׁם כִּי מִדּוֹעַ לֹא עָלְתָה אֶרְכָּת בַּת־עָמִי:

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?

Jeremiah 8:18-23 expresses his grief over his people's suffering. The idea that the Lord departed from Zion (v. 19) and brought about the ruin of the people of Jerusalem (*בַּת־עָמִי*) causes Jeremiah to question the effectiveness of human physicians. Gilead, its physicians and its healing balm (*צָרִי*) are useless in healing moral wounds of the people. The word *rapha* is used here as a Qal participle, meaning “physician” (*רֹפֵא*). Although it is about the spiritual healing of

³³The phrase *עַל־יָקְלָהּ* derives from the verb *קָלַל*, *be slight, swift, trifling*. See BDB, 886.

³⁴Guy Couturier, “Jeremiah,” *NJBC*, 274. The expression *בַּת־עָמִי*, occurs once in Isa 22:4, but it is a favorite expression of Jeremiah and Lamentations. See Jer 4:11; 6:26; 8:11, 19, 21-22; 9:1, 7; 14:17; Lam 2:11; 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10.

the people, Jeremiah uses illustrations coming from physical restoration of wounds, specifically the image of new flesh that grows at the wounded spot as it is indicated by the use of אָרוּכָה.

The word *rapha*, in its participial form “physician,” does not directly provide any theological reflection. In the wider context, however, one can see that because of the advanced stage of the moral sickness and religious infidelity human remedies can be of no help. Only divine *rapha* can bring about a transformation and true restoration.

Jer 15:18

לִמָּה הִיָּה כְּאֵבִי נֹצֵחַ וּמִכְתִּי אֲנוּשָׁה מֵאַנְהָה הֲרֵפָא הִיוּ תַּהֲיִיה
לִי כְמוֹ אֲכֹזֵב מַיִם לֹא נֶאֱמָנוּ:

Why has my pain been perpetual and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you indeed be to me like a deceptive stream with water that is unreliable?

Jeremiah 15:10-21 focuses on the internal crises that the prophet undergoes in his mission. It is composed of two parts: Jeremiah's complaints (vv. 15-18) and Yahweh's answers (vv. 19-21). Verses 10-14 are believed to be a later addition.³⁵ While pursuing his original call filled with the powerful promise of divine assistance (Jer 1:18-19), Jeremiah becomes increasingly frustrated with people's refusal to pay attention to his messages. The rejection of the messages and personal attacks on the prophet render his life miserable and cursed. It is in this context that Jeremiah asks God in verse 18 about his continuous pain (כְּאֵב), incurable wounds (מִכָּה) that refuse to be healed (רָפָא). Jeremiah's suffering is

³⁵ Couturier, “Jeremiah,” 280.

illustrated in terms of physical pain and injuries, yet it is only an image for his internal emotional and spiritual disruption that causes frustration and anguish. Divine response with a possibility of restoration comes in the following verse 19. The verb *rapha* is not used in this verse, however the contents of the restoration typically carried by *rapha* are present. The restoration is conditional and depends on Jeremiah's willingness to convert (שוב). It is a different conversion than what is expected from the rest of the people. For Jeremiah, it is the re-establishment of his trust in Yahweh. This conversion requires faith in the wisdom and effectiveness of the carrying of the divine message despite its apparent failure. If Jeremiah is able to put his trust in God and thus resume his mission, God will restore him. Divine restoration in verse 19 is expressed by the same word *shuv* (אם-תשוב ואשיבך לפני תעמוד), if you return (שוב) I will return you (שוב) to stand in my presence. Theological dependence of *rapha* on *shuv* appears frequently in biblical verses regardless whether the word *shuv* is actually used or just implied as a concept. The double use of *shuv* in verse 19 can be seen as a theological paradox or irony, but above all it expresses the sequence of the process of *rapha*. Man must initiate his turning to God so that God can turn to him and then restore him.

Jeremiah 15:18-19 illustrates a unique condition that requires the action of *rapha*. It is not a physical sickness (at least not in the first place), not a state of religious infidelity or moral corruption, but a lack of trust in the sense and success of the mandated divine mission. It is a personal disappointment with the vocation assigned to the prophet. It is about the messenger of the divine healing who is in

need of his own healing. The two kinds of healing are of a different nature yet they both spring from the divine *rapha*. In some ways Jeremiah's lack of trust in God can be compared to his people's religious unfaithfulness resulting in turning to foreign gods or reliance on political alliances. The reason for turning to gods and rulers other than Yahweh must have been produced by what people perceived as the absence or ineffectiveness of God in their vital daily affairs. Within the framework of Yahwism, this lack of trust is considered a serious transgression, idolatry, and unfaithfulness.

Jer 17:14

רְפְּאֵנִי יְהוָה וְאֲרַפָּא הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי וְאִשְׁעָה כִּי תִהְלֶתִי אִתָּה:

Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are my praise.

In this verse Jeremiah prays for his own healing and salvation. It is in the context of his preaching of divinely ordained misfortune and the prayer for divine vengeance on his persecutors (Jer 17:14-18). If these verses are read in connection with Jer 15:18-19, then they imply the prophet's conversion and the renewal of his call. At this point the prophet is asking for *rapha* and *yasha* (יָשַׁע), the latter understood more as deliverance than theological salvation as in the later Christian proclamation.³⁶ Consequently, if *rapha* is paralleled with *yasha* then the action of *rapha* indicates also a liberation, deliverance and rescue from a disadvantageous state, condition or situation. Despite their independent lexical and semantic ranges, *rapha* and *yasha* in some contexts can be taken as

³⁶ For more on *yasha* see *BDB*, 446-47.

describing the same results. One needs to notice that for both verbs there is an implied pre-existing negative situation which requires the action of either *rapha* or *yasha* so that the original state of proper functioning and being might be restored.

Jer 19:11

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת כֹּכָה
אֲשֶׁבֶר אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה וְאֶת־הָעִיר הַזֹּאת כַּאֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבֵּר אֶת־כֶּלִי
הַיֹּצֵר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִוָּכַל לְהִרְפָּה עוֹד וּבִתְפֹּת יִקְבְּרוּ מֵאִין מְקוֹם לְקַבּוֹר:

And say to them, thus says the Lord of hosts, just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter's vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial.

The entire chapter 19 of the Book of Jeremiah is dedicated to the divine reproach and the announcement of an upcoming punishment for the people of Jerusalem. Verse 11 specifies the divine threat. God's menace of breaking (שָׁבַר) his people and the city indicates a military incursion of the enemy and the horrors of the siege. This fierce punishment is compared to the shattering of a potter's vessel. The destruction of the vessel is irreparable (לֹא־יִוָּכַל לְהִרְפָּה).³⁷

Jer 30:17

כִּי אֶעֱלֶה אֲרֻכָּה לָךְ וּמִמְכוֹתֶיךָ אֲרַפֶּאךָ נְאֻמֵּי־יְהוָה כִּי נִדְחָה
קָרְאוּ לָךְ צִיּוֹן הִיא דִּרְשׁ אֵין לָהּ:

For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds, declares the Lord, because they have called you an outcast, saying: It is Zion; no one cares for her.

This healing fragment is placed in the large section promising the restoration of Israel (Jer 30:1-31:40), that reaches its climax in the vision of the

³⁷ Editors of the *BHS* placed in the text the verb רָפָה, yet the note informs us that many codices prefer רָפָא. See *BHS*, 820.

new covenant (בְּרִית הַדְּשָׁה), with Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31). Before the restoration is produced, the prophecy discusses illnesses of the people and punishments leading to deliverance and healing. Jeremiah 30:12 mentions incurable fracture (אִנּוּשׁ לְשִׁבְרָךְ) and serious injury (נִחְלָה מִכָּתוּךְ). Both words – fracture (שִׁבְרָךְ) and wound (מָכָה) – occur in connection with *rapha* in other biblical passages. Jeremiah 30:13b reinforces the image of incurable sickness of God's people saying: there is no healing (רְפוּאָה) for its sore (מִזֹּר), no recovery (תְּשׁוּבָה) for Israel (לְמִזֹּר רְפוּאוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה אֵין לָךְ). Despite this incurable situation, God promises in verse 17 to bring health (אֲשַׁלֵּם אֶרְכָּה לָךְ) to his people, and to heal their wounds (אֲרַפְאוּךָ). The incurable becomes curable because of the power of the divine healer. The incurability of Israel needs to be placed in the human context because the reliance on human powers and politics proves to be deceptive (Jer 30:14). God is the only restoring and healing power even of what in human judgment is impossible. Verse 15b offers justifications of divine punishments which are great iniquity (רַב עֲוֹנוֹךְ), and numerous sins (עֲצֻמוֹת חַטָּאוֹתֶיךָ). Verse 22 offers reasons for curing, namely, God's unique possession of his people "you are my people and I will be your God." The final verse of the entire chapter, verse 24, explains the reason for the divine anger that caused misfortunes of his people. As mentioned above, iniquity, transgressions and sin are responsible for divine wrath. But there is another aspect to it according to verse 24. God's anger will not cease (שׁוּב) until "He has performed and accomplished the intent of his heart." This statement on the one hand stresses the medicinal character of divine punishment that appears also in other biblical passages. On the other hand,

there is yet another aspect, which is the medicinal character of the divine wrath (חרון).

Jer 33:6

הִנְנִי מַעֲלֶה-לָהֶם אֲרָכָה וּמְרַפָּא וְרִפְאֵתִים וְנִלְיִתִּי לָהֶם עֲתֵרֶת
שְׁלֹום וְאֱמֶת:

Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth.

Jeremiah 33 envisions the restoration of Jerusalem. While the prophet is still imprisoned in Jerusalem the Lord directs to him the word promising a bright future for the city. God compels Jeremiah to call upon Him so that great things beyond the knowledge of the prophet may be revealed to him (Jer 33:3). Verse 6 is saturated with the motifs of healing of the people of Jerusalem. First it is the promise of bringing health (אֲרָכָה), healing (מְרַפָּא), and the action of healing (רִפְאֵת). The grouping of three healing words in one verse intensifies the meaning of the promise. At the same time, it shows that each word, despite their common semantic range, has its own unique meaning. The delineation of semantic differences as understood by the original audience may be at its best difficult, and at its worst impossible. Second, in addition to the intense healing restoration, the divine oracle assures them the unveiling of peace (שְׁלֹום) and truth (אֱמֶת). The link between *rapha* and *shalom* has been seen before, but the connection between *rapha* and *emet* is original to this passage. This connection is interesting and might signify two things, depending on the meaning of *emet*. If *emet* (אֱמֶת) is taken in its meaning of *firmness, reliability, stability* and

continuance,³⁸ then the relationship between *rapha* and *emet* would emphasize the stability of the restoration. This restoration cannot be taken away; it stands firm since it is based on the divine covenant with Jeremiah's people that cannot be broken (Jer 33:20-21). If *emet* is intended as truth, then one could argue that it is in the context of falsehoods announced by religious leaders, prophets and priests, that eventually lead to destruction and exile. After the healing, all false teachings will be replaced by truth intended as "a body of ethical or religious knowledge."³⁹ Both interpretations of *emet* seem to be legitimate in relation to the restorative character of *rapha*.

Jer 51:8-9

8 פְּתָאִם נָפְלָה בָּבֶל וַתִּשָּׁבֶר הִלִּילוּ עָלֶיהָ קְחוּ צָרִי לְמַכְאוּכָהּ אִלֵּי תִרְפָּא:
9 (רַפְּאֵנוּ) [רַפִּינוּ] אֶת־בָּבֶל וְלֹא נִרְפְּתָה עֲזֹבָהּ וְנִלְךְ אִישׁ לְאַרְצוֹ
כִּי־נָנַע אֶל־הַשָּׁמַיִם מִשְׁפָּטָהּ וְנִשָּׂא עַד־שָׁחִקִים:

8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken; wail over her! Bring balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. 9 We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed; forsake her and let us each go to his own country, for her judgment has reached to heaven and towers up to the very skies.

The lengthy chapter 51 reveals the second prophecy against Babylon.

Judah and Israel are assured that they are not widowed of their God, the Lord of Hosts (Jer 51:5). Yet, the vengeance of the Lord, especially for his Temple, is irrevocable (Jer 51:6,11,12). The word *rapha* occurs in two consecutive verses, in Jer 51:8-9. The healing of Babylon is mentioned with derisory and mocking intent. We find typical words that indicate a need for *rapha*. Babylon has fallen

³⁸ See BDB, 54.

³⁹ BDB, 54.

and been broken (שָׁבַר). She needs balm (צֶרֶר) to sooth her pain (מְכָאֵב). The text speculates about Babylon: perhaps (אִילִי) she may be healed (רָפָא), v. 8. The derisory tone comes with the expressions “wail over her! Bring balm for her pain!” as if the oppressed people were deeply concerned with the fate of the hated oppressor. Verse 9 supplies a response to the mocking command in v. 8 to attempt to alleviate pains and to heal Babylon. The response is negative stating that we were healed (רָפְאוּנוּ, Piel Perfect), but she was not healed (וְלֹא נִרְפְּתָה, Niphal Perfect). Thus, the disease of Babylon is incurable. Even though it was only a hypothetical, mocking scenario, human agents were unable to carry out an effective healing. Yet, Jeremiah 30:17, analyzed before, taught that God was able to cure what was incurable when it concerned his people. The case of Babylon is different, here God does not want to perform the healing, his vengeance is resolved to destroy the city beyond recovery (Jer 51:11-12). This passage is another illustration of how the use of *rapha* does not mean the materialization of the healing but its definitive absence.

Summary (Jeremiah)

The Book of Jeremiah connects the need of repentance (*shuv*) with the subsequent action of *rapha* just as seen in other biblical books (Jer 3:22; 15:19-21). This means that healing remains only a possibility dependent upon conversion. In addition to the traditional moral understanding of conversion, Jeremiah speaks about a conversion from the lack of faith and trust in the

guidance, sense and effectiveness of divine actions that apparently produce no results other than the prophet's suffering. This conversion, like the moral one, is also conditional for obtaining divine healing (Jer 15:19). In its theological usage, the action of *rapha* is subordinated and dependent on the action of *shuv*. This seems to be the case for the Book of Jeremiah and many other passages. It is also true, on the other hand, that in a few instances of its theological employment *rapha* may operate independently of conversion.

The action of *rapha* may be directed to abstract concepts such as unfaithfulness (מְשׁוּבָה), and brokenness (שִׁבְר) as illustrated by Jer 3:22; 6:14; 8:11. These abstract states of being are synonymous with the negative condition of the people that requires divine restoration. The theme of healing of unfaithfulness occurs also in Hos 14:5.

Jeremiah contrasts divine healing with the ineffective attempts of human healing. Human healing tends to be superficial (Jer 6:14; 8:11), and unsuccessful (Jer 8:22; 51:8). But, when *rapha* issues from the divine will then it can accomplish healings that are in human judgment impossible (Jer 30:12-17). As illustrated in Jer 30:17, God can cure what is incurable as long as he wants to do so.

In addition to the *rapha-shalom* benefits of divine restoration after conversion, Jeremiah 33 adds another positive aspect, truth (*emet*). In this sense truth points to the body of ethical and religious knowledge. It implies adherence to religious orthodoxy resulting from spiritual understanding of the

meaning of the divine law. However, neither *shalom* nor *rapha* may take place without the prior elimination of iniquity followed by conversion (Jer 6:14).

There is mention of the failed healing of the pagan city of Babylon. The healing was unsuccessful because of a lack of repentance on the part of Babylon. In addition, only humans attempted to heal the city while God, because of the lack of conversion, was not interested in assuring the effects of *rapha* for the unrepentant people. Since conversion is essential in the healing process, one may assume that God would restore Babylon if its inhabitants changed their evil ways, just as it happened to the inhabitants of Nineveh after the preaching of Jonah. Divine healing granted to the Egyptians in Isa 19:22 and the sparing of the inhabitants of Nineveh upon the preaching of Jonah support the idea that also in Jeremiah the granting of *rapha* was not limited to the people of the Covenant, but to those who were willing to turn to God.

The notions of healing and salvation become almost synonymous. Jeremiah 17:14 parallels the action of *rapha* with that of *yasha*. Typically, both healing and saving evoke a previous negative state which requires the action of rescuing, deliverance and liberation. Additionally, both verbs indicate the completion of a transition from a negative to a positive situation.

Analysis of *rapha* in Hosea

Hos 5:13

וַיֵּרָא אֶפְרַיִם אֶת־חָלָיו וַיהוּדָה אֶת־מְזוּלוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶפְרַיִם אֶל־אַשּׁוּר וַיִּשְׁלַח
אֶל־מֶלֶךְ יָרֵב וְהוּא לֹא יוֹכֵל לְרַפֵּא לָכֶם וְלֹא־יִגְהַה מִכֶּם מְזוֹר:

When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb. But he is unable to heal you, or to cure you of your wound.

Hosea 5 describes religious unfaithfulness of the people and leaders of Israel, Judah, and Ephraim (Hos 5:1-7). In the second section of the chapter (Hos 5:8-15), Hosea laments that in the situation of political trouble Ephraim and Judah looked for healing from Assyria instead of turning to their God. Verse 13 discusses the healing. Both Ephraim and Judah have recognized respectively their sickness (חָלִי), and wound (מַזּוּר) and turned for help to Assyria. This proved useless because the king of Assyria could (יָכַל) neither heal them (רָפָא), nor make depart (נָקָה) their wound (מַזּוּר).⁴⁰

Hosea reasons that wicked deeds (מַעַלְלִים) and the spirit of religious harlotry prevent Ephraim and Judah from returning (שׁוּב) to God (Hos 5:4). Consequently, true healing is impossible since the condition of repentance and conversion has not been met. Given his people's reluctance to convert, God decides to withdraw his presence from them hoping that this will push them towards repentance (Hos 5:15). Hosea 5:13 is yet another example of the teaching that God is the only healer of his people. The healing, however, must be preceded by the creation of a proper internal disposition of the "sick," that is, by repentance and conversion.

Hos 6:1

לָכֵן וְנָשׁוּבָה אֶל־יְהוָה כִּי הוּא טָרַף וַיִּרְפָּאנוּ יְדֵי וַיַּחַבְּשֵׁנוּ:

Come, let us return to the Lord. For he has torn us, but he will heal us; he has wounded us, but he will bandage us.

⁴⁰ The verb נָקָה functions as a healing verb meaning the departure of a wound or affliction, in other words healing, or curing. See *BDB*, 155.

The sixth chapter of Hosea 6 is composed of two parts. The first section, Hos 6:1-3 transmits people's words expressing a desire to return to God and be healed. For Hosea, however, these words are not sincere since there is no sufficient change in people's attitude.⁴¹ The lack of sincerity can be deduced from the second part of the chapter, Hos 6:4-11 where God expresses his frustration with the people.⁴²

Should the desire for conversion be sincere, then Hos 6:1-3 would express the beautiful process of true divine healing, a paradigm of restoration. Hosea 5:16b offers the first element of conversion: "In their affliction (צָרָה) they shall earnestly seek me." The next step is offered by Hos 6:1 where people encourage each other to return (שׁוּבָה) to God for healing and binding of their wounds (הִבְשָׁתָם). From the same verse the reader learns that people understand that it is Yahweh who tore (פָּרַד) and struck (נָכָה) them. The verse forms a synonymous parallelism expressing the process of the divine *rapha* as a transition from a negative state to a positive one. Verbs are the indicators of those states:

From	<i>tearing apart</i> (פָּרַד)	to	<i>restoring</i> (פָּרַד)
From	<i>striking</i> (נָכָה)	to	<i>binding up</i> (הִבְשָׁתָם).

⁴¹ See Dennis McCarthy and Roland Murphy, "Hosea," *NJBC*, 223.

⁴² Yahweh accuses them of superficial piety (Hos 6:4), violation of the covenant, being untrue to him (Hos 6:5), and evil acts (Hos 6:8-9). It is in this context that famous words expressing divine preference are said: "It is mercy that I desire, and not sacrifice, knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings," Hos 6:6. Harsh prophetic rebukes are due to people's disregard for God's will (Hos 6:5).

The hope for the divine healing becomes certitude to the point that the people of Israel speak of themselves as being revived and returned to life in order to live in His presence (v. 2). The commitment to knowing God will assure that He will come to his people like the rain (v.3). These poetic illustrations list what the divine healing produces: internal revival and life in the presence of the Lord. Unfortunately, despite the beautiful phraseology, Ephraim, Judah and Israel are not committed to changing their ways. The speech about the divine healing restoration may express only people's realization that God is the only healer of their misfortunes. They understand that turning to him (שוב) is necessary to transform the situation of illness into prosperity. Yet, the change they intend remains superficial, and as such ineffective, since it does not involve the transformation of their hearts. People are willing to make sacrifices and holocausts for God, yet are not ready to love and know him (v. 6). Through this, Hosea points to a new aspect involved in the divine healing, that is, a heartfelt and loving acceptance of God. This means that a legalistic and ritualistic conversion is insufficient since it does not necessarily involve the engagement of the heart.

Hos 7:1

כִּרְפָאִי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְנִגְלָה עֲוֹן אֶפְרַיִם וְרַעְיוֹת שְׁמֶרֶן כִּי פָעֲלוּ שָׁקֶר
וְגִנְבִי יָבוֹא פֶשַׁע נִדְוָד בַּחוּץ:

When I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is uncovered, and the evil deeds of Samaria, for they deal falsely; the thief enters in, bandits raid outside.

Hosea 7:1-2 continues the theme of divine frustration with his people and it is a logical continuation of Hos 6:4-11 discussed above. The presence of

iniquity (עון), and evil deeds (רעה), leaves Yahweh only wishing for the day when he can heal (רפא) his people. This verse brings an important contribution to the entire treatment of the divine *rapha*. We have seen verses with *rapha* where God was not directly involved in granting *rapha* in terms of healing, or not interested whatsoever in such a healing yet granting it because of the intercession of an agent of healing. On other occasions God would promise the healing. These instances do not give the reader much of an insight into the divine nature, or feelings that the Hebrew divinity would have. In Hosea 7:1 the student of the theology of *rapha* gains more access to the divine heart. Yahweh actually desires to grant *rapha* to his people, he is anxiously and eagerly looking forward to it. The lack of conversion prevents God from dispensing his healing force. This explains the meaning of the divine dilemma and frustration: a necessity to apply punishment with all its devastation and horror in order to grant *rapha*, resulting in loving relationship with God. Based on biblical fragments that employ *rapha* along with their contexts, one does not see another way in which divine healing and restoration could take place. Once transgression has occurred, the only way to effective restoration must lead through punishment-conversion steps. Doing otherwise would contradict the principle and the nature of the Divine Being. As stated before, punishment in the form of misfortune, illness, social and political disruption serves only a medicinal purpose. It is an important element in the theology of *rapha*, yet is it not essential. Whenever *rapha* occurs in the context of transgression, sin, iniquity, violation of the law, etc., the most important element is conversion (שוב). Conversion means both

self-realization of wrongdoing and the willingness to change. It is the conversion that creates the right condition and prepares the ground for the upcoming action of *rapha*. Although God remains independent in granting his favors, it is the human element that activates the transforming power of the divine *rapha*. In summary, when *rapha* is connected to transgression, then conversion becomes a trigger point. Without conversion to God, the people cannot be granted *rapha*. Without the people's conversion, God cannot impart it.

Hos 11:3

וְאַנְכִי תִרְנֹלְתִי לְאַפְרַיִם קָחָם עַל־זְרֻעֹתַי וְלֹא יָדְעוּ כִּי רָפָאתִים:

Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them.

The text of Hosea 11:1-11 is “one of the high points of the OT revelation of God’s nature.”⁴³ This section compares God to a tender, loving father who raised his child from the time of infancy. Despite all the fatherly love, the son Israel/Ephraim turned out to be ungrateful and unfaithful to his father. The motifs of transgression, idolatry, refusal to repent and divine punishment are similar to other passages. The word *rapha* occurs in v. 3. God proclaims that, among other things, he taught Ephraim how to walk, took him (them, people) in his arms and healed them (רָפָא). The meaning of *rapha* is unclear in this verse. In the context of fostering and nurturing of the child it could imply wholeness and well-being. Thus, “I healed them” (רָפָאתִים) could be interpreted as “I kept them wholesome, in good health, in proper physical, spiritual, and social functioning.”

⁴³ McCarthy and Murphy, “Hosea,” *NJBC*, 226.

On the other hand, the employment of *rapha* in v. 3 could mean ongoing restorations that God granted to his people after they left Egypt.⁴⁴ Regardless of the nature of *rapha* given to Israel, it is important to notice that it was given without Israel knowing it (ולא ידעו). This statement eliminates the possibility of *rapha* after committing a transgression since in those cases typically punishment and a need for conversion would follow of which Israel would become aware. Rather, *rapha* was more of a providential action of God assuring that the wholeness or well-being of Israel would continue. This harmonizes with the image of a parent who provides for the needs of a child, or even anticipates them, despite the child's unawareness of the parental providence.

Hos 14:5

אַרְפֵּא מְשׁוּבָתָם אֶהְבֶּם נִדְבָה כִּי שָׁב אַפִּי מִמֶּנּוּ:

I will heal their apostasy, I will love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.

The ending chapter of the Book of Hosea, chapter 14, concludes with the optimistic vision of restoration based on the certainty that God loves his people. The restoration is assured by a sincere conversion contrasted with the one discussed in the analysis of *rapha* in Hosea 6. This time God's people are determined to undergo a real change. Israel is called to conversion (שוב) and reminded that it collapsed because of its iniquity (עון), vv. 1-2. Assyria and idols are rejected (v. 3) as the legitimate source of help. Then in vv. 4-8 a variety of divine benefits are promised to the people of Israel: healing, divine love, turning

⁴⁴ Hos 11:1 defines Israel's coming out of Egypt as the beginning of the people of Israel: "out of Egypt I called my son."

away of divine wrath, and general prosperity. The word *rapha* occurs in v. 5, about the healing of apostasy (אַרְפָּא מְשׁוּבָתָם) which recalls the words of Jeremiah 3:22 (אַרְפָּא מְשׁוּבָתֵיכֶם).⁴⁵ While in Jeremiah it was the first instance of the occurrence of *rapha*, and basically the beginning of his book, here in Hosea the theme of healing of apostasy concludes the prophetic messages and the entire book.

For Hosea the healing of apostasy comes with another major theological assertion. After healing the unfaithfulness of his people, God will love them freely (אֶהְבֶּם בְּרַחֲמָיִם) because (כִּי) his anger has turned away from them. Taken at face value, this statement implies that the divine love encounters restrictions because of the divine anger (אַף). Consequently, people afflicted by the sickness of unfaithfulness are unable to experience the love of God. The manifestation of the divine love that assures well-being and prosperity is postponed until the time of restoration (*rapha*). In the meantime God's wrath becomes the leading aspect in his relationship with the people. The anger itself is the emotion causing the issuance of remedial measures, that is punishment (illness). The punishment should engender conversion leading to healing. The healing, in its turn, results in generous love from God, and prosperity. Hosea 14 reinforces the theological scheme of *rapha* happening after a transgression. The cycle of transgression-punishment-restoration cannot be changed. Even the Hebrew deity is subject to this rule. God's love and anger are regulated by it. It is not a rule imposed on God; instead, it is a rule resulting from and expressing his nature.

⁴⁵ The healing of apostasy was already discussed in the analysis of Jer 3:22.

Summary (Hosea)

Like Jeremiah, Hosea places the verb *rapha* in the context of human inability to heal disorders of a spiritual, moral and political nature (Hos 5:13). Similarly to Isaiah and Jeremiah, here also conversion is a condition for the true healing. Persistence in religious harlotry and evil acts prevent people from the ability to convert and obtain healing (Hos 5:4). In other words, attachment to evil disables a person to enter into the process of change (transition) necessary for the action of *rapha* to take place.

Hosea thinks of the absence of God in the midst of his people resulting in various disasters as the medicinal approach through which Yahweh hopes to induce conversion leading to healing (Hos 5:15). This portrays Yahweh as a caring God who attempts various techniques in order to heal his wounded people.

The usage of *rapha* in Hosea illustrates the divine dilemma in the tension between imparting punishment and longing for the time when people convert and are healed (Hos 7:1, Isa 53). This tension issues from the pattern of transgression-punishment-restoration. Even God seems to be unable to overrule the sequence of events leading to healing after transgression. Punishment is a bitter remedy not only for the people but also for God who, being faithful to his nature, needs to impart it.

The prophet reiterates the relationship between *shuv* and *rapha* found also in Isaiah and Jeremiah. It is human conversion that puts into motion divine healing. In this way the success of the healing process depends on the disposition of both the subject and the object of *rapha*.

Healing occurs in the context of divine love and tenderness for Israel. This healing comes about in the providential action of God securing Israel's wholeness and well-being (Hos 11:1-11). In this context *rapha* is not related to previous transgression. Thus, *rapha* does not indicate restoration but continuance of divine blessing and providential guidance. This is an important, although rare, feature of the usage of *rapha*. It means that *rapha* can be used without the existence of a previous negative state of dysfunction or disorder generally seen as illness.

Hosea sets apart some benefits that take effect after the process of *rapha* reaches its completion. It is the internal revival, the life in the presence of God, and the knowledge of God, and a heartfelt loving acceptance of God (Hos 6:1-6).

As in other books, Hosea maintains the teachings about God wounding and healing as well as the notion of healing as a divinely powered transition from a negative to a positive state. For the most part it is a process of restoration to the original good state destroyed by transgression. The action of *rapha*, as in Jeremiah, may be directed to an abstract concept such as unfaithfulness (מִשׁוּבָה), (Hos 14:5).

Analysis of *rapha* in Ezekiel, Zechariah and Lamentations

Ezek 34:4

אֶת־הַנַּחֲלֹת לֹא חִזַּקְתָּם וְאֶת־הַחֹלִיָּה לֹא רִפֵּאתָם וְלַנִּשְׁבֵּרֹת לֹא חִבַּשְׁתָּם
וְאֶת־הַנִּדְחֹת לֹא הִשְׁבַּתָּם וְאֶת־הָאֲבֵדֹת לֹא בִקַּשְׁתָּם וּבַחֲזָקָה רִדִיתָם אֹתָם וּבִכְפָּרָה:
Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them.

Ezekiel 34 discusses the guilt of the bad leaders of Israel as well as the subsequent divine guidance of the nation. Both themes come through images of shepherds and sheep. Verses 1-10 focus on the reproach of the careless shepherds while verses 11-31 discuss the new divine shepherding of Israel. The word *rapha* occurs in the first section, which is also our primary interest. The contents and the tone of Ezek 34:1-10 are similar to those of Jer 23:1-4 which also speaks about the irresponsible shepherds of Israel.

Among many faults of the shepherds of Israel are: pasturing themselves rather than the sheep, taking advantage, neglecting, treating them harshly, and not looking for the lost sheep. Verse 4 accuses the shepherds of not strengthening (חִזַּק) the sickly (הַנַּחֲלֹת), not healing (רִפֵּא) the diseased (הַחֹלִיָּה) nor binding up (חִבַּשׁ) the injured (הַנִּשְׁבֵּרֹת).⁴⁶ Verse 4a can be taken as a double accusation in the form of a synonymous parallelism. This combination allows us to partially overlay the semantic circle of *rapha* on that of *chazaq*, thus reflecting the element of strengthening in the process of healing:

⁴⁶ The Participle Niphal (הַנַּחֲלֹת), *sickly*, and the Participle Qal (הַחֹלִיָּה), *diseased*, both derive from the verb חָלָה, *weak, sick* and can be taken as synonyms.

Not strengthening (חֲזָק)	the sickly (אֶת־הַנְּחֻלֹּת)
Not healing (רָפָא)	the diseased (וְאֶת־הַחֻלָּה)

From the theological perspective, the leaders of Israel are made responsible for not applying *rapha* to their people. *Rapha* certainly has spiritual, religious, social and political connotations in this verse. Despite the image of wounded and sickly sheep, there is no reason to project a physical dimension of *rapha* upon the negligence of the leaders. They were not physicians but shepherds of the people. It is the only time in the *rapha* passages when someone is charged for the omission of not healing the other. It was the duty of the leaders of Israel to use *rapha* on behalf of their people. They were supposed to be the agents of divine healing and restoration but failed to do so. This failure led to a national disaster that now only Yahweh is able to restore. As a good shepherd God will bind up the broken and strengthen the sick (אֶחָבֵשׁ וְאֶת־הַחֻלָּה אֲחֻזֵּק) as promised in verse 16.

Ezek 47:8-9

8 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה יוֹצְאִים אֶל־הַגְּלִילָה הַקְּדֻמוֹנָה וַיֵּרְדּוּ
עַל־הָעֵרְבָה וּבָאוּ הַיָּמָה אֶל־הַיָּמָה הַמוֹצְאִים (וְנִרְפְּאוּ) [וְנִרְפְּאוּ] הַמַּיִם:
9 וְהָיָה כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁרָץ אֵל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יָבוֹא שָׁם נַחֲלִים יַחֲיָה
וְהָיָה הַדָּגָה רַבָּה מְאֹד כִּי בָּאוּ שָׁמָּה הַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּרְפְּאוּ וְחֵי כָל
אֲשֶׁר־יָבוֹא שָׁמָּה הַנַּחֲלִים:
11 (בְּצִאתוֹ) [בְּצִאתוֹ] וַיִּגְבְּאוּ וְלֹא יִרְפְּאוּ לַמֶּלַח נִתְּנוּ:

8 And he saith unto me, These waters are going forth unto the east circuit, and have gone down unto the desert, and have entered the sea; unto the sea they are brought forth, and the waters have been healed. 9 It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. 11 But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.

Ezekiel 47:1-12 speaks about miraculous waters flowing out of the Temple area through the desert all the way to the Dead Sea. The temple waters, when mixed with the waters of the Dead Sea, have the ability to transform salty water into fresh water. The verb *rapha* is used three times. In verses 8 and 9 *rapha* indicates the transformation of the salty water into fresh water. In verse 11 the verb *rapha* is used to say that the banks of the Dead Sea, its marshes and swamps, will not be transformed into the salt-free areas. In other words, the immediate surrounding areas of the Dead Sea will not undergo the transformation that is implied in the meaning of the verb *rapha*.

Lam 2:13

מִה־אֶעִידָךְ מָה אֲדַמֶּה־לָּךְ הִבַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם מָה
 אֲשׁוּה־לָּךְ וְאֵנְחֶמְךָ בְּתוֹלַת בְּתִצִּיּוֹן כִּי־גָדוֹל כַּיָּם יִרְפָּא־לָךְ:
 How shall I admonish you? To what shall I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? To
 what shall I liken you as I comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is as vast
 as the sea; Who can heal you?

The destruction of the Temple, the fall of Jerusalem (587 B.C.E.), the loss of sovereignty and the Babylonian exile stand in the background of Lamentations. Chapter 2 describes Yahweh's wrath against Zion. Babylonian destructions are perceived as the expression of the divine anger caused by the unfaithfulness of God's people. He is the one who detests Zion (v. 1), consumes the dwellings of Jacob (v. 2), devours like a blazing fire (v. 3), becomes like an enemy (v. 5), disowns his sanctuary (v. 7), etc. Devastation, death and the degree of human suffering including infants causes the writer to ask in bitterness and pain to what he could compare Jerusalem (v. 13). Her downfall is as great

as the sea. Who can heal (רפא) her? The question is intensified by the fact that human intervention is out of the question, and on the other hand even Yahweh rose against his daughter Jerusalem. The underlying idea is that without God on her side, there is no restoration (*rapha*) for Jerusalem. As the writer continues his poetic expressions of grief, descriptions of national catastrophe, and personal tragedies, by the very end of his book he still believes in the possibility of God's intervention. It is a desperate call for the only possible remedy for the present state of grave illness: "Restore us (שוב) to you, O Lord, that we may be restored (שוב)" (Lam 5:21). In their tragic and catastrophic perspective Lamentations are not even vaguely about healing. However, the book clarifies, if a healing ever comes it will be from Yahweh.

Zech 11:16

כִּי הִנֵּה־אֲנִי מֵקִים רֹעֶה בָּאָרֶץ הַנִּכְחָדוֹת לֹא־יִפְקֹד הַנֶּעֱרָר
לֹא־יִבְקֹשׁ וְהַנִּשְׁבֶּרֶת לֹא יִרְפָּא הַנִּצָּבָה לֹא יִכְלִיכַל וּבֶשֶׁר הַבְּרִיאָה
יֹאכַל וּפְרִסִּיהֶן יִפְרֹק:

For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs.

Zechariah 11:4-17 alludes to themes already known from Jer 23:1-4 and Ezek 34:1-31, concerning the evil shepherds of Israel. Yet, the text of Zechariah in many ways contradicts the ideas of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Here, God commissions the prophet to play a symbolic role of the shepherd of the flock that will be slaughtered (Zech 11:4). Then the prophet is asked to play the role of a foolish shepherd who will not care for his flock (Zech 11:15). The word *rapha* occurs in the context of the foolish prophet's negligence of his duties mentioned

in verse 16. He will not take note of those who perish, seek the strayed, nor heal (רָפָא) the injured (וְהַשְׁבֵּרֵת). Instead, he will feast on the fat ones. The use of *rapha* comes with similar theological expectations as in other passages about the wicked shepherds. In the ideal, religiously and spiritually sound situation, they should take care of the flock. Healing of the wounded sheep is part of a shepherd's duty.

What is the function of *rapha* in the oracles about the bad shepherds? All of the accounts are metaphorical and allegorical; they are about the leaders and the people of Israel. From that context the application of *rapha* must be related to religious and spiritual wounds of the sheep. Unfaithfulness to the covenant, idolatry, social evils, disobedience to Yahweh's true prophets, and lack of trust in God were the illnesses of the flock of Israel. The responsibility of the leaders was to heal this situation of spiritual illness. The absence of the healing of the spirit led to consequences well beyond spiritual character. It brought physical pain, social disorders and national catastrophe. While the sheep, that is the people, are blamed for their resistance to conversion, the leaders are made responsible for the absence of healing actions. The leaders had a medicine at their disposal, a healing that would make people aware of the need for conversion. The conversion in its turn would assure the divine healing. This implies that there are two different actions of *rapha* in the prophetic literature. One is the action of God which brings restoration, wellness and prosperity. The other action of *rapha* relates to the human level. It is a medicinal preaching and enforcing adherence to the divine law as stipulated in the

Covenant. In short, when *rapha* is used in reference to shepherds it means the healing action that leads to conversion. When *rapha* is used in reference to God, it means the healing action that takes place after conversion.

Summary (Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Lamentations)

The use of *rapha* in Lamentations is negative; there is no healing since even God is against Jerusalem. However, should the healing ever takes place it will come only from Yahweh. Lamentations acknowledges the difficulty, if not impossibility, of human conversion after being deeply immersed in transgression and devastated by punishment. The writer pleads with God to convert the people (*shuv*), so that they might be able to convert (*shuv*), (Lam 5:21).

Both Ezekiel and Zechariah use the verb *rapha* in the context of bad shepherds responsible for the people of Israel. Ezekiel charges the shepherds with the guilt of not-healing the people. Healing would mean here effective leadership assuring religious orthodoxy, successful social and political decisions based upon faithfulness to God's teaching. The goal of the shepherds' healing was to bring people to conversion; then the divine healing would generate restoration. Thus, the nature of the healing that the spiritual leaders were supposed to provide is different from the nature of the divine healing (Zech 11:16).

Chapter 3

Analysis of the Noun *marpe* in the Hebrew Bible

Analysis of *marpe* in the Historical Books

2 Chr 21:18

ואַחֲרַי כָּל־זֶאת נִגְפוּ יְהוָה בְּמַעְיוֹ לְחִלֵּי לֶאֱיִן מִרְפָּא:

So after all this the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable sickness.

The word *marpe* occurs in the context of religious infidelity and the subsequent divine punishment announced in the so-called Letter of Elijah (2 Chr 21:12-15). Divine castigation turned against Jehoram the king of Judah, his family, his people, and possessions (2 Chr 21:16-17). God smote (נָגַף) king Jehoram with a fatal disease of the bowels (2 Chr 21:18). The narrative mentions the disease (חִלֵּי) four times (twice in v 15, and once in verses 18 and 19).

The use of *marpe* in the presently analyzed verse 18 is closely related to as well as contrasted with the disease (חִלֵּי). The employment of *marpe* comes with the phrase לֶאֱיִן מִרְפָּא, which announces that there will be no curing of the disease. The contextual dimension of *marpe* is clearly physical, related to proper bodily functions. The nouns *cure*, *healing*, and *recovery* offer good translation equivalents for *marpe* in this verse.

From the theological perspective one may observe that the role of God is limited to causing an incurable disease of Jehoram. This negative and punitive aspect of the deity is reinforced by the list of other calamities sent to the king's

relatives and other people of Judah. The overall use of the term *marpe* is negative (לֵאֵין מִרְפָּא) in the sense that it indicates the absence of what *marpe* could potentially bring to the king and his kingdom.

2 Chr 36:16

וַיְהִיו מַלְעָבִים בְּמַלְאֲכֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וּבִזְיוֹם דְּבָרָיו וּמַתְעַתְּעִים
בְּנִבְאָיו עַד עָלוֹת חֲמַת־יְהוָה בְּעַמּוֹ עַד־לֵאֵין מִרְפָּא:

But they mocked the messengers of God, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy.

Chapter 36 of Second Chronicles concludes the entire book. After mentioning some “evil” rulers of Judah, the Chronicler proceeds to say that “all the other princes, priests, and people” were deeply involved in religious infidelity by practicing idolatry (2 Chr 36:14). In spite of Nabuchadnezzar’s invasion which would ideally bring the inhabitants of Judah to moral awakening the people remained stiff-necked. Verse 15 informs us that God sent various messengers with warnings because of his compassion for the people and the Temple. The people’s response, however, was negative; they mocked the messengers of God, despised his warnings, and scoffed at his prophets (2 Chr 36:16a). As a result, the fury of God (חֲמַת־יְהוָה) rose beyond *marpe* (עַד־לֵאֵין מִרְפָּא, 2 Chr 36:16b), causing further death, destruction and the exile to Babylon (2 Chr 36:17-20).

As in the previous example (2 Chr 21:18) here also the word *marpe* occurs in the larger context of religious infidelity with the consequences marked by political, social, and personal disasters. Both situations are very similar and almost parallel. However, in contrast to the previous example, the present context mentions no physical sickness or disease. So, if one renders *marpe* as

healing, then it would assume metaphorical and spiritual meanings. Yet, the contextual function of *marpe* does not seem to call for such a translation. Rather it indicates a point of no return, something irreversible. *Marpe* is directly connected with God's anger (תַּמְחִיָּהוּ, 2 Chr 36:16b) that cannot be appeased, stopped, or quenched. Thus, a good lexical candidate for rendering *marpe* in this verse is remedy. It can be applied to various levels of meaning in the verse without resorting to a figurative dimension that would otherwise come with the use of healing.

The verse makes people responsible for their misfortune while it justifies God for expressing his anger through negative events. Despite the lack of restoration the image of God remains positive. Sending of messengers and prophets illustrates divine interest in granting healing to his people. Yet, God's patience has its limits and when those are crossed the possibility of healing disappears.

Summary (Historical Books)

The word *marpe* in Second Chronicles offers a theological scenario analogous to that of *rapha*. The noun occurs within the pattern of offense-punishment-recovery. God castigates the people for transgressions, yet if they convert they will benefit from *marpe*. The usage of the noun is negative in both instances: לֵאמֹן מִרְפָּא, in 2 Chr 21:18 and עֲדִלְאִין מִרְפָּא, in 2 Chr 36:16, pointing to the moment when there is no more possibility of either benefiting from or obtaining

marpe. The context allows us to translate *marpe* as: healing, cure, recovery, or remedy.

Analysis of *marpe* in Wisdom Literature

Prov 4:22

כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לְמַצְאֵיהֶם וְלִכְל־בָּשָׂרוֹ מִרְפָּא:

For life they are to those finding them, and to all their flesh healing.

Paying attention to God's words (דְּבַר) and sayings (אִמְרָה) mentioned in Prov 4:20, brings *marpe* to the flesh (בָּשָׂר) of the devotee (Prov 4:22). The immediate context carries no negative elements such as disease, dysfunctional moral, religious, social or political conditions. Therefore, in verse 22, *marpe* does not indicate any kind of recovery, healing, curing, or restoration. Instead, it may be paralleled with life (חַיִּים) mentioned in the first part of the verse, 22a. Both *chayyim* and *marpe* are rewards for the one who listens to the divine teaching. The parallelism between *chayyim* and *marpe* is not based on a strict synonymous relationship, but rather it points to the continuation and the expansion of the meaning of the first part of the verse. While life, *chayyim*, is a general benefit for those who pay attention to God's words, *marpe* is a particular quality of that life that manifests itself in the physical sphere. The contextual dimension of *marpe* is physical because it is related to the flesh (בָּשָׂר). The absence of a negative concept of disease, sickness, bodily dysfunction, etc., permits us to eliminate healing as the primary meaning of *marpe* in this verse. Healing implies a previous negative state of disease or dysfunction. As already

underscored, such a state is totally absent from the context of Prov 4:22, and therefore there is no healing from anything. Instead, *marpe* has only a positive context. It assures to the flesh its proper and optimal function. Thus, the contents and the context of the verse suggest that the meaning of *marpe* is that of health and vitality.

From the religious ethical point, *marpe* issues from adherence to the words of God. That means that the immediate cause of *marpe* is the believer's choice to faithfully apply divine teachings. The remote cause of *marpe* is God himself who rewards his faithful devotee with health and vitality of the body.

Prov 6:15

עַל־כֵּן פֶּתְאָם יָבוֹא אִידוֹ פָּתַע יִשָּׁבֵר וְאֵין מְרַפָּא:

Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing.

A worthless person, a wicked man, (אָדָם בְּלִיעֵל אִישׁ אָוֶן) introduced in verse 12, will experience sudden distress and calamity (אִידוֹ), and be broken beyond *marpe*. The word שָׁבַר, *brake, crush*, indicates both physical breaking of things (bones, pottery, idols, limbs), as well as a figurative breaking of such concepts as pride, hearts, kingdoms, etc.¹ In the present verse *marpe* illustrates the recovery or the reversal of the condition of brokenness. This recovery will not take place because of the persistence in wickedness of the worthless man.

The noun *marpe* is put in the relationship with a general concept of calamity (אִידוֹ). From this, one may argue that the contextual dimension of *marpe*

¹ BDB, 990-91.

is not focused on the physical aspect, that is healing, or at least not exclusively. Instead, the meaning of *marpe* in this verse may be that of remedy.

Since there is no mention of God either in this verse or in the larger context beginning with verse 12, one may ask if God is related to *marpe* at all. Certainly, God is the remote source of *marpe*, since he is the one who grants healing according to the theology of the Hebrew Bible. Yet, the lack of the explicit mention of God in the immediate context shows him more as a principle than a personal God. This is in line with the wisdom literature. It teaches that depending on the nature of personal choices one may expect predictable consequences. Bad choices and persistence in wrongdoing lead to destruction. This is how life and the nature of things are. There are certain universal laws and principles that render results according to the nature of the actions taken by human beings. God is the base and justification for these laws even if he is not mentioned explicitly.

Prov 12:18

יֵשׁ בֹּטָה כַּמְדִּקְרוֹת חֶרֶב וּלְשׁוֹן חֲכָמִים מְרַפָּא:

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

This verse contains a contrast of two kinds of speakers, a rash speaker (בֹּטָה), and a wise speaker (חֲכָמִים). Both kinds of speakers are compared to something. The speech of the thoughtless person (בֹּטָה), is like the thrust of a sword while the words of the wise (חֲכָמִים), are *marpe*. Common sense indicates that what can be expected from the words of the unwise is disturbance, chaos, commotion, turmoil, and disharmony. In contrast, the speech of the wise is

inundated with the experience of *marpe*. Taking the verse as an antithetic parallelism allows us to assign to *marpe* the meaning of peace, harmony, and serenity. This is valid especially if the verse is taken as a general sapiential utterance. If, however, one understands this verse as discussing negative results and experiences caused by the speech of the unwise speaker, then the word *marpe* can mean also the recovery from that negative state. From this we can argue that the speakers, the wise and the foolish, indicate only a surface level of the meaning of the verse. The deeper meaning would encompass two kinds of situations created by the speakers: a negative situation and a positive one. In this sense *marpe* would mean recovery, and a healing of an emotional, social, and even psychological nature. In other words, it is a recovery from the negative results of the speech of the unwise.

God is not mentioned in any direct way. Also, there are no references to ethical or religious choices. What was said before also applies here. The Book of Proverbs contemplates the interaction between human beings and universal principles. God is the one who sustains and reinforces these principles. To know, learn and apply these rules of life means for a believer to achieve success and benefit from *marpe*.

Prov 13:17

מִלֶּאךָ רָשָׁע יִפֹּל בָּרָע וְצִיר אֱמוּנִים מְרַפָּא:

A wicked messenger falls into evil, but a faithful envoy falls into healing.

The contrast between a wicked messenger (מִלֶּאךָ רָשָׁע), and a faithful envoy (צִיר אֱמוּנִים) becomes evident in their different destinies. While the wicked

messenger falls into evil, the faithful one ends up in the state of *marpe*. If one attempts to derive the meaning of *marpe* from the antithetic parallelism of this verse then the noun would mean something good and positive, directly opposite to evil (רע). In contrast to some contemporary translations (NAB, NASB), I would suggest that the syntactical and semantic interpretation applied to the first part of the verse, “a wicked messenger falls into evil,” should follow in the second part of the same verse. In other words, just as the wicked messenger neither is evil, nor brings evil, but falls (נפל) into evil, in the same way the verb נפל needs to be supplied and implied in the second part of the verse. Consequently, the faithful envoy instead of being, or bringing מרפא, he falls into מרפא. This means that *marpe* is not a predicate but a direct object of Prov 13:17b. What supports my argument is the overall focus of the verse, on the messenger and not on what he is or means in relation to others. As in other previously analyzed fragments from Proverbs, also in this verse there is no direct reference either to God, ethical choices, or religious faithfulness. Instead, the verse offers a reflection on the interaction between a human being and universal principles.

Prov 14:30

חַיִּי בַּשָּׂרִים לֵב מְרַפָּא וְרָקִב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְאָה:

A healed heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones.

This verse is an antithetic parallelism with the application of contrasting concepts. The expression לֵב מְרַפָּא, could be understood as either a heart of *marpe*, a heart filled with *marpe*, or a heart transformed by *marpe*. The contrasting concept to *marpe* is קִנְאָה, meaning ardor, zeal, jealousy. Using the

contrast of the parallelism as the base for determining the semantic range of *marpe* one can point to calmness, tranquility, composure, and serenity as possible translation equivalents.

Prov 15:4

מִרְפָּא לְשׁוֹן עֵץ חַיִּים וְסִלְף בְּרוּחַ:

A healed tongue is a tree of life, but crookedness in it crushes the spirit.

This proverb exemplifies the use of synecdoche, where a part of the body, the tongue in this verse, implies the whole person.² The expression מִרְפָּא לְשׁוֹן may be rendered as a tongue of *marpe*, a tongue expressing *marpe*, or a tongue transformed by *marpe*. In verse 4b the word סִלְף, *crookedness*, is used in reference to the tongue. The contrast created by the use of the antithetical parallelism allows us to recover the meaning of *marpe*. Since *marpe* is contrasted with crookedness, it might be understood as integrity, sincerity, and wholesomeness.

Prov 16:24

צוּף־דְּבַשׁ אִמְרֵי־נֶעֱם מְתוּק לְנַפֶּשׁ וּמִרְפָּא לְעֲצָם:

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

In this proverb the word *marpe* is not contrasted with any other expression. Rather, it is listed among the positive results that come from a pleasant utterance (אִמְרֵי־נֶעֱם). On the basis of this verse only, any attempt to define the contextual meaning of *marpe* remains speculative. What can be as

² Thomas McCreesh, "Proverbs," *NJBC*, 454.

gratifying as “sweetness to the soul” when one refers to the bone? Perhaps strength, and vitality.

Prov 29:1

אִישׁ תּוֹכַחֲוֹת מִקְשֵׁה-עַרְף פָּתַע יִשְׁבֵּר וְאֵין מִרְפָּא:

A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.

The expression מִרְפָּא וְאֵין יִשְׁבֵּר, broken beyond remedy, was already found in Proverbs 6:15. Although the Hebrew phrase is exactly the same the Greek version uses two different renderings. In Prov 6:15 we find στυπτηρὶς ἀνίατος “irretrievable ruin,” while in Prov 29:1 we encounter αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἰασις “there is no healing.” This detail may raise a larger issue. If the Greek translator of Prov 6:15 and 29:1 was the same person, and the Hebrew text in front of the translator was the same, as it is attested by the MT, then the meaning of *marpe* had no rigid boundaries in the translator’s mind.

Ecc1 10:4

אִם-רוּחַ הַמּוֹשֵׁל תַּעֲלֶה עָלֶיךָ מִקוֹמְךָ אַל-תִּנָּח כִּי מִרְפָּא יִנִּיחַ חַטָּאִים גְּדוֹלִים:

If the ruler’s temper rises against you, do not abandon your position, because composure allays great offenses.

This verse describes the effects of *marpe*. The Hebrew text may be translated as “if the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not rest (אַל-תִּנָּח) your place because *marpe* rests (יִנִּיחַ) great offenses.” It is interesting that the verb נִיחַ is used twice. In both cases it is a Hiphil imperfect which carries the meaning of cause to rest, or give rest. The first instance מִקוֹמְךָ אַל-תִּנָּח, “do not rest your place,” can be understood in the sense of not abandoning one’s place, or position. This

would imply standing up against the ruler. The subsequent phrase יָנִיחַ הַמַּעֲלִים גְּדוּלִים, *marpe* rests great offenses,” could mean that *marpe* settles down or neutralizes great offenses. It appears to me that there is a connection between standing up against the spirit of the ruler and *marpe*. The opposition to the ruler implies strength, fortitude, courage, and firmness. Ecclesiastes sees the application of these characteristics as something virtuous when it comes in the context of confrontation with the ruler. By analogy, *marpe* would semantically participate in the meaning of these virtuous characteristics. As such, *marpe* could be seen as an ethical virtue that overpowers and dismisses great offenses.

Summary (Wisdom Literature)

One half of the biblical use of *marpe*, that is eight out of sixteen instances, belongs to the Book of Proverbs. In these cases, the word *marpe* never occurs in direct connection with God. The closest possible relation between God and *marpe* comes with Prov 4:22, assuming that God is the speaker in verse 4:20. Otherwise, *marpe* exemplifies a variety of rewards for living a life of wisdom. In most cases it relates to non-physical benefits with a vast range of possible translation equivalents such as: healing, life, peace, harmony, serenity, calmness, composure, tranquility, integrity, wholesomeness, strength, fortitude, courage. Sometimes *marpe* may suggest physical benefits, for example, vitality and strength.

God stands behind the benefits that *marpe* offers although there is no direct link between the two concepts. *Marpe* issues from the obedience to and the application of wisdom in one's life. *Marpe* is the result of the proper interaction between an individual and the universal principles that respond accordingly to the nature of human actions. Wise actions bring the benefits of *marpe*, foolish choices result in the absence of *marpe*. In this sense, human beings have control and access to *marpe* through the application of wisdom taught in Proverbs. God neither directly grants nor withholds *marpe*. Instead, *marpe* is a part of universal laws and principles that operate according to one's conduct. The role and place of God seems to be as the one who sustains and approves of these principles.

In contrast to prophetic literature, Proverbs are not strong on associating *marpe* with moral issues, religious faithfulness, and conversion. Similarly, there is a notable absence of a pre-existing negative state that would need to be remedied by *marpe*. If there is a negative state, at all, then it comes in a parallelism. This negative state, situation, or condition, however, is not pre-existing. Instead, it is contemporary to *marpe*. One reaches *marpe* not through ethical conversion but through a wise choice. In other words, for the most part, besides the wisdom literature, either *rapha*, or *marpe* entail a transition from a negative state to a positive one by means of conversion. But in Proverbs, the underlying concept of choice replaces the idea of transition and conversion. While in the transition/conversion cases *marpe* and *rapha* had a personal God standing nearby and powering the action of restoration and recovery, in the

choice cases of Proverbs it is the human being who interacts with universal laws. It is these laws that render the benefits of *marpe* or bring the disaster of its absence. God only stands in the background endorsing and enforcing universal laws.

Oftentimes, to obtain the meaning of *marpe* I employed the contrast from a parallelism. This technique allowed me to assign some semantic boundaries within which the noun situates itself. Although this technique doesn't pinpoint the exact lexical equivalent, it seems to be the best method of harnessing a particular meaning of a multi-dimensional semantic field of this noun. Consequently, it is better to say that in a particular verse *marpe* covers an extensive field of the meaning of harmony instead of asserting that *marpe* means harmony. The Book of Ecclesiastes offers only one instance of *marpe*. It is in line with the wisdom literature discussed above with Proverbs.

Analysis of *marpe* in Prophets

Jer 8:15

קָנָה לְשָׁלוֹם וְאֵין טוֹב לָעֵת מִרְפָּה וְהִנֵּה בַעֲתָהּ:

We waited for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror!

Jeremiah 8:15 presents an example of a synonymous synthetic parallelism where the sense of v. 15a is expressed in different words but with largely similar meaning in 15b.³ The first pair of parallel terms links שָׁלוֹם,

³In synthetic parallelism (also called constructive or formal parallelism), according to Lowth, the parallelism consists only in the similar form of construction; in which word does not

completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, with *marpe*. The other pair of similar units is *טוב ואין*, no good and *בעתה*, terror, dismay. Based upon the parallelism, the meaning of *marpe* should be participating in that of *שלום*, especially in the sense of peace, completeness, soundness.

Jer 14:19

הַמָּאֵס מְאִסָּתָּ אֶת־יְהוּדָה אִם־בְּצִיּוֹן נִעְלָה נַפְשָׁךְ מִדּוֹעַ
הַכִּיתָנוּ וְאֵין לָנוּ מִרְפָּא קִנְיָה לְשָׁלוֹם וְאֵין טוֹב וְלַעַת מִרְפָּא וְהִנֵּה בַעֲתָהּ:
Have you completely rejected Judah? Or have you loathed Zion? Why have you stricken
us so that we are beyond healing? We waited for peace, but nothing good came; and for a
time of healing, but behold, terror!

In this verse the word *marpe* occurs twice. The second part of the verse, that is 14:19b, is a doublet of Jer 8:15 already discussed above. The first part of the verse, 14:19a, also contains *marpe* in *ואין לנו מרפא*. The concept of being “struck, smitten or crushed” beyond *marpe* has been illustrated before in a few instances: in 2 Chr 21:18 (*לאין מרפא*) where Jehoram was plagued with a disease beyond healing; in 2 Chr 36:16 (*לאין מרפא*) speaking against God’s fury beyond remedy for those who despised the prophets; in Prov 6:15 (*ישבר ואין מרפא*) where a worthless man is crushed beyond recovery and in Prov 29:1 (*ישבר ואין מרפא*) where a stubborn man will be broken beyond remedy.

The absence of divine *marpe* gives place to terror, and no good. This stresses the theology of the two ways: the way of the wicked and the way of the righteous. The Hebrew Bible does not offer too many options or alternatives for

answer to word, and sentence to sentence, as equivalent or opposite; but there is a correspondence and equality between different propositions, in respect of the shape and turn of the whole sentence, and of the constructive parts.” Adele Berlin, “Parallelism,” *ABD*, 5:156.

the people of the Covenant. It is either to be with God and experience various blessings, including *marpe*, or to walk without God and suffer adversities and destruction.

Being stricken beyond remedy stands in line with theological reflections coming from *rapha* passages. Also here, the text reinforces the theology of no-return from punishment after divine patience has been exhausted in vain awaiting of people's conversion.

Jer 33:6

הִנְנִי מַעֲלֶה-לָהֶם אֲרוּכָה וּמִרְפָּא וְנִגַּלְתִּי לָהֶם עֵתֶרֶת שְׁלוֹם וְאֱמֶת:

Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth.

This verse contains three words that are commonly related to the concepts of healing and restoration: אֲרוּכָה, מִרְפָּא, and רְפָא.⁴ The first part of the verse pairs two words מִרְפָּא and אֲרוּכָה. They are both subject to the verb עָלָה, go up, ascend, climb, (הִנְנִי מַעֲלֶה-לָהֶם אֲרוּכָה וּמִרְפָּא). Yet, it is the noun אֲרוּכָה that plays the primary role in this segment. This can be argued because on the basis of the Hebrew concordance the word אֲרוּכָה almost always, with the exception of Isa 58:8, follows the verb עָלָה.⁵ The combination עָלָה אֲרוּכָה, forms a phrase that might be understood as bring healing, bring restoration. From this perspective the presence of מִרְפָּא, adds to the entire phrase a stronger meaning of restoration. The noun *arukah* indicates healing of a wound, restoration, “properly the new

⁴ The verb *rapha* is discussed under Jer 33:6 in the section analyzing verbal occurrences of *rapha*.

⁵ See the use of *arukah* in 2 Chr 24:13; Neh 4:1; Jer 8:22; and Jer 30:17.

flesh that grows at the wounded spot.”⁶ The Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon asserts that for the most part biblical writers use *arukah* in its figurative sense when, for example, it is applied to the restoration of Israel or rebuilding of the walls.⁷ This is certainly true, but only if the primary meaning of *arukah* is restricted to a physical healing. In other words, the use of *arukah* in any other than a physical aspect would assume a figurative meaning. If, however, in the minds of the speakers and writers of the biblical texts *arukah* had a more general meaning of restoration, then its use in the context of Israel, nation, walls, etc. is not figurative. Instead, it literally means the return or restoration to the original good state or condition lost through transgression.

⁶ *BDB*, 74.

⁷ See *BDB*, 74.

Mal 3:20

וְזָרְחָה לָכֶם יְרֵאִי שְׁמִי שֶׁמֶשׁ צְדָקָה וּמִרְפָּא בְּכַנְפֶיהָ וַיֵּצְאוּתָם
וּפְשָׁתָם כְּעֻלֵי מִרְבֵּק:

(English Malachi 4:2, Protestant only) But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

The judgment of the evildoers will be followed by the redemption and recompense of the righteous (Mal 3:18-19). Verse 20 promises to those who fear the name of God that the sun of righteousness will rise upon them with *marpe* in its wings. Subsequently, God-fearers will be filled with enthusiasm and prosper as calves that either jump or increase (פוש). From this, one can observe that the effects of *marpe* carry a transforming power for the God-fearers. The entire context of Malachi 3 suggests that *marpe* indicates restoration after sufferings, and remuneration for endured injustice. The rising of the sun implies previous darkness, a pre-existing negative situation that was calling for *marpe*. God appears as the direct cause and the giver of *marpe*. Yet, it is religious devotion of God-fearers that conditions the benefits and effectiveness of *marpe*.

Summary (Prophets)

In Jeremiah and Malachi, *marpe* occurs in contexts similar to Chronicles evoking the familiar pattern of transgression-punishment-restoration where the recovery depends on conversion. This is analogous to the theological background of *rapha* which follows the same pattern for most of its usage.

Chapter 4

Restorative Theology of *rapha* and *marpe*

Secular Usage of *rapha*

The Hebrew Bible employs the verb *rapha* in two senses or contexts: secular and theological. By secular usage of *rapha* I mean instances where the verb occurs without references to God and/or not having any direct relation to the spiritual life of a person. Typically in these contexts the action of *rapha* is dissociated from moral and ethical issues. Certain verses discussing restoration of objects and natural physical cures exemplify the secular usage of the verb (Exod 21:19; Lev 13:18; 1 Kgs 18:30; 2 Kgs 8:29; 9:15). In these cases the action of *rapha* implies a transition from the state or condition of being broken, damaged, dysfunctional, injured or sick to the state of proper functioning and existing just as before the disruption took place. Among possible translation equivalents one may choose for these cases the following verbs: *to heal*, *to restore*, *to repair*, *to rebuild*, etc. The participial form of *rapha* usually translated as physicians or embalmers also belongs to the secular usage.

The secular employment of *rapha* reveals the basic form critical pattern (sequence) in which the verb is imbedded. The sequence is composed of four integral stages without which the action of *rapha* could not take place: Original Positive State, Disruption, Negative State, and Restored Positive State. If only one of these elements were missing then the rules of logic, and certainly

linguistic pre-understanding of the biblical writer and the audience, would prevent the usage of *rapha* and disallow its action from materializing. For example, the Negative State could not exist before the prior Disruption just as the Restoration would be logically impossible if there was no prior Negative State. Similarly, one can say that the verbal force of *rapha* comes to its completion (Restoration) only after one has evidence of the existence of the Restored Positive State (RPS). Thus, the secular usage of *rapha* presupposes the existence of the discussed four elements. Even though the complete pattern is composed of four elements not all of them need to appear in the text at the same time. These elements may be scattered through many chapters of the narrative either preceding or following the verse where *rapha* is used. Frequently, these elements may be just implied. At any rate they must appear in some form, at least on an implicit conceptual level, in order to give logical justification to the action of *rapha*. Here is a linear sequence of the four elements of the pattern:

Original Positive State → Disruption → Negative State → *rapha* → Restored Positive State

In its very basic and most noticeable version, the form critical pattern of the secular usage of *rapha* emphasizes only two contrasting states, namely the Negative State and the Restored Positive State. The other two components of the pattern (Original Positive State and Disruption) might be only implied. Thus, in its basic shape the form critical pattern of *rapha* is shown in the transition between two states; a negative and a positive one. Both states are highly polarized and mutually exclusive, with two extremes of existing or functioning.

The Negative State suggests the condition of dysfunction, brokenness, or sickness. Conversely, the Positive State indicates proper functionality, wholeness, or health. The restorative force of *rapha* accomplishes the change and the transition between the two states. Here is the illustration of the transitional character of *rapha*:

Negative State → *rapha* → Positive State

Since the action of *rapha* is not a creative force but a restorative one, in addition to the Negative and Positive states there is a need for two additional concepts: The Original Positive State and its Disruption. The rules of language and common sense insist that before something becomes dysfunctional it must have existed, either ontologically or just conceptually, in its proper, good, and positive state. The Original Positive State stands in contrast and opposition to the Negative State:

Original Positive State ↔ Negative State

The negative transition that has occurred between the two polarized states assumes various kinds of Disruption. Just as the action of *rapha* was necessary for the transition between the Negative State and the Positive State, also here the action of disruption must take place so that the Original Positive State turns into the Negative State. Although I refer to this negative transition as Disruption, a noun, in its essence it carries the force of a verb, since there must be some kind of action that causes the cessation of the Original Positive State and turns it

into the Negative State. In this way the action of Disruption becomes responsible for frustrating and upsetting the proper condition of the Original Positive State.

Here is a linear illustration:

Original Positive State → disruptive action → Negative State

There is a contrast between the two sets of states: (1) the Original Positive State and the Negative State, (2) the Negative State and the Restored Positive State.

Original Positive State ↔ Negative State
Negative State ↔ Restored Positive State

There is also the contrast between verbal actions produced by forces of Disruption and Restoration (*rapha*):

Disruption (disruptive action) ↔ Restoration (restorative action of *rapha*)

One needs to remember the remarks made in the commentary on 1 Kgs 18:30, the rebuilding of the altar, that the Original Positive State and the Restored Positive State are somewhat different. Even though the actions of disruption and restoration (*rapha*) don't interfere with the preservation of the identity of the original state or object, these actions may modify some of its ontological components. As it was said there, the altar remains essentially the same after being destroyed and rebuilt yet it might now contain several new

elements such as additional mortar, wood or stones. In its rebuilt form the altar may also have a slightly different size or shape from its original version. These observations are important in determining the quality of the action of *rapha*.

Once the Disruption has taken place, even the restorative force of the verb *rapha* cannot return or make re-appear the condition of the Original Positive State (OPS) in its original version. The Disruption introduces permanent changes that even *rapha* cannot delete or obliterate. This leads us to the assertion that the action of *rapha* consists mainly in the transformation of the Negative State into the original blueprint either of a state or of an idea. There is a difference between the actual OPS that existed at a certain time and its blueprint, which is more of an atemporal concept. From this perspective the force of *rapha* assumes a re-creative quality. Thus, *rapha* is neither a creative force (*ex nihilo*) nor a magical force (returning the object to the exact state, as it used to be, as if the disruption left no permanent imprints). Instead, the action of *rapha* re-creates according to the original form or blueprint. This is the reason for differentiating the two states: the Original Positive State and the Restored Positive State where the latter could be said to be a new creation. In other words the action of *rapha* does not fix the old but makes it new. This carries enormous theological implications. Here is a graphic summarization of the form critical pattern of *rapha* for its secular usage:

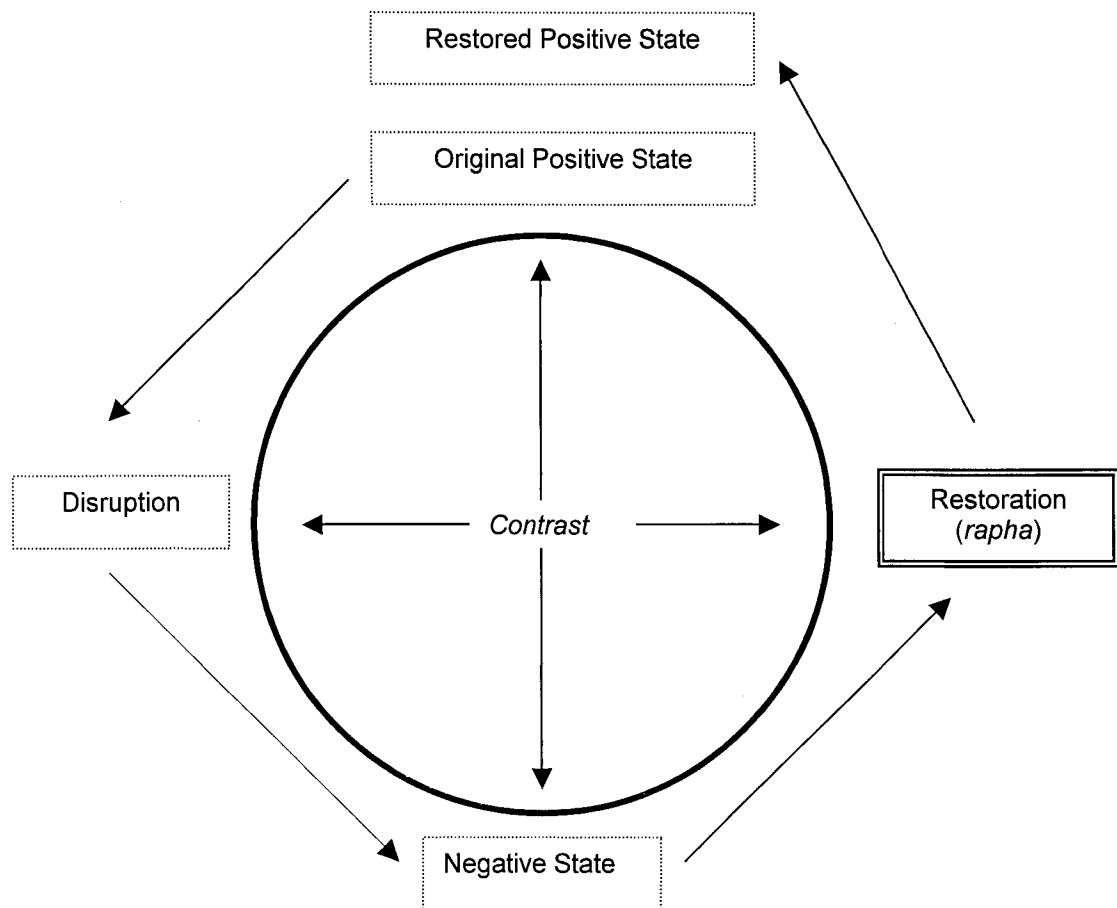


Figure 1. Form critical patterns of the secular usage of *rapha*.

The above observations are about the form critical patterns in which the action of *rapha* is embedded for the instances of its secular usage. It is my contention that the theological usage of *rapha*, which I am about to summarize, adopted basic patterns from the secular usage and developed these patterns into a more complex theological construct. It is only logical that biblical writers when employing *rapha* for theological purposes would base their linguistic coherence

on what they and their audience would intellectually or intuitively know about the linguistic connotations of the verb as attested to in daily life, or *Sitz im Leben*.

Theological Usage of *rapha*

For most of its occurrences, the verb *rapha* either offers a direct theological reflection from the verse where it is located or from the larger context of its pericope. In these instances there typically appears a reference to God, possibly his involvement in granting or withholding the action of *rapha*, moral aspects related to monotheistic fidelity, observance of God's commandments, Covenant, personal trust in God, etc.

Whether it is a secular or theological employment of *rapha*, in almost all these cases there is a detectable notion of transition from a negative state to a positive one. The action of the verb indicates either the entire process of transition from one state to another or just the final conclusive phase of that process. The action of *rapha* displays its full restorative force between two opposite and contrasted sides, those of dysfunction and proper functionality. In theological contexts the action of *rapha* can relate to many fields of human life and activity: physical, mental, emotional, religious, spiritual, social, political, etc. Textual analysis shows that God may grant or withdraw the force of *rapha* in regards to a variety of grammatical objects. It can be a single individual or the entire nation either Jewish or pagan, cities like Jerusalem and Babylon, objects like land, water, or nature in general. Yahweh may also use the healing power

implied in the verb *rapha* to remedy certain religious/moral concepts such as unfaithfulness and sin. When the restorative force of *rapha* aims at a human being then it might be targeting several areas: body, soul, heart, spirit and bones. In other words, the nature of the action of *rapha* is multi-dimensional. It might heal a sick human body, eliminate emotional pain, restore internal mental balance, and revitalize a dejected spirit. Yet, the most important aspect of the verb *rapha* in regards to a human being comes with its spiritual internal force of transformation leading from a defective relationship with God, or the absence of such a relationship toward a blessed life in harmony with God. Before summarizing individual stages, I offer below a graphic with all the form critical elements of the verb *rapha*, their interactions and logical sequence.

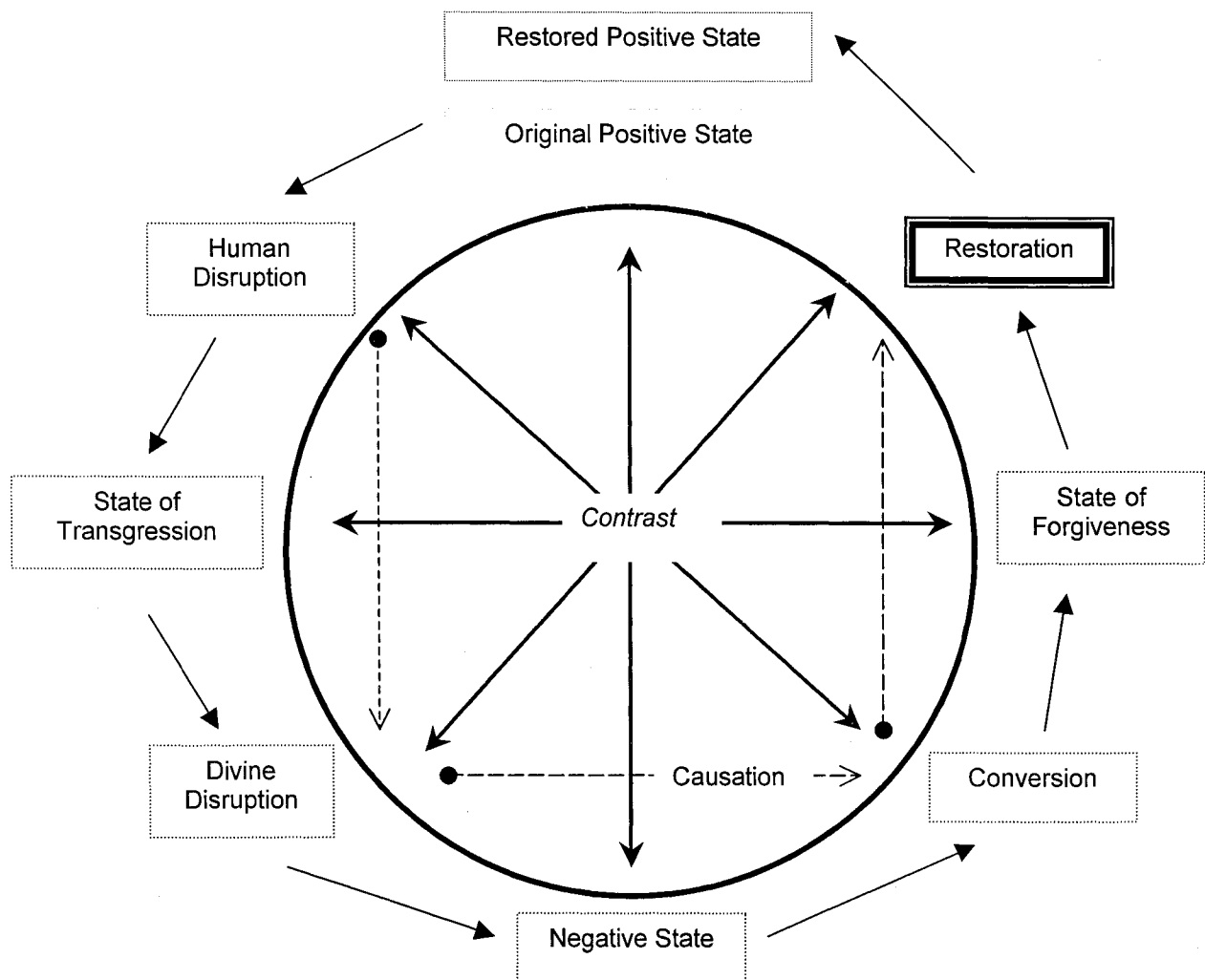


Figure 2. Form critical patterns of the theological usage of *rapha*.

As stated before the theological application of *rapha* follows and elaborates on the form critical pattern of this verb laid down by its secular usage. Also here the pattern begins with the **Original Positive State** (OPS). In the secular dimension the OPS means proper functionality, wholeness, or health relating either to an object or a human being. In the theological employment of

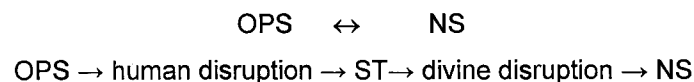
rapha the OPS assumes a new, overarching aspect, namely the implication of God. Consequently, for theological contexts the OPS indicates the existence, functioning, living, and acting as God intended. It reminds us of the original goodness of things after God completed his creation: “God saw all (כָּל) that he had made, and behold, it was very good (וַהֲנִיחַ טוֹב מְאֹד)” (Gen 1:31). This original goodness includes both human beings created in the divine image (צִלְמֵם, Gen 1:27), as well as the rest of the creation and reality. This is the original perfect state of health in its literary and metaphoric sense.

It is important to keep in mind that the notion of Creation doesn't come explicitly as the OPS in *rapha* passages. Rather it comes when one looks for the ultimate state and situation of wholeness. It was that state, the OPS, that suffered the original disruption through the disobedience of the parents of humankind. The transgression in Eden brought about sickness that needed to be healed. A more practical reference to the OPS comes with the identification with the Covenant, especially the Mosaic one, and the divine teaching implied in this Covenant. The Covenant offered a model of religious morality based on the adherence to divine laws. Faithfulness to these laws, loyalty to Yahweh and the trust in the divinely appointed leaders constitute the concept of the OPS in most *rapha* passages. This OPS means living, believing, and acting as God intended or is pleased with. The positive state is guaranteed by the words “I will take you for my people, and I will be your God” (Exod 6:7). Frequent references to “a land flowing with honey and milk,” in the Pentateuch, echoed even in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, might be interpreted as a symbolic embodiment of that OPS (Exod 3:8;

Lev 20:24; Jer 11:5; Ezek 20:6, etc.). Whenever people stray from this beneficial relationship and union with God, they disrupt, transgress and violate the OPS. This leads us to a very important observation. For the theological *rapha* passages the OPS is not related to an event or situation of the past, whether Creation or Sinai, but rather to the ongoing quality of the interaction with God at any given period of biblical Israel. The existence or the assumption of the OPS is imperative for the usage of *rapha*. With the few exceptions where *rapha* is unrelated to a previous negative situation, the verb retains its restorative character throughout the Hebrew Bible. Its force restores things to their original good condition. It is crucial to notice that the theological concept of the OPS must have existed in the minds of biblical writers and audience in order to retain a meaningful and logical quality of the action of *rapha*. In other words, if there were no underlying idea of an OPS then the action of *rapha* would be devoid of meaning.

Human Disruption (HD) terminates the existence of the OPS. It introduces ungodly elements into the positive situation of spiritual harmony and health. In its essence it is a rebellion and a disregard for the divinely established order. As seen in individual cases Disruption appears under several names: sin, transgression, evil, idolatry, etc. It is the human violation of the spiritual harmony between God and man. In this way humans create a new state according to their thinking and preferences, let us call it a state of religious idolatry or social oppression. In general this situation might be called a **State of Transgression** (ST). It is a condition of living in enmity with God where an individual or the

nation has disrupted the spiritual union with Yahweh. Such a state provokes a divine reaction to improper human actions. It urges God to take corrective measures in order to bring back the OPS of harmony and unity between him and his devotees. It is this State of Transgression (ST) that forces the Deity to initiate a medicinal procedure of punishment. The first phase of the divine healing comes with the **Divine Disruption** (DD) of the humanly created State of Transgression. Divine Disruption assumes various forms: personal illness, military invasions, unfruitfulness of the land, etc. The purpose of DD is to use pain as the means of awakening the transgressor to the realization of the State of Transgression. Somehow, paradoxically, pain, illness and affliction become a remedy. The whole situation ends up in the **Negative State** (NS) of illness, destruction, foreign dominance, plague, drought, famine, suffering, misfortune, and divine reluctance to assist humans in their enterprises. At this point one may notice that so far there have been three states and two disruptions. People disrupt the divinely established OPS by transgression, thus creating their own new state, a State of Transgression (ST) which in its turn is disrupted by God through punishment. The result of the two, human and divine disruptions, comes in the form of the Negative State (NS), a state opposed to and polarized with the OPS. Here follows a linear illustration:



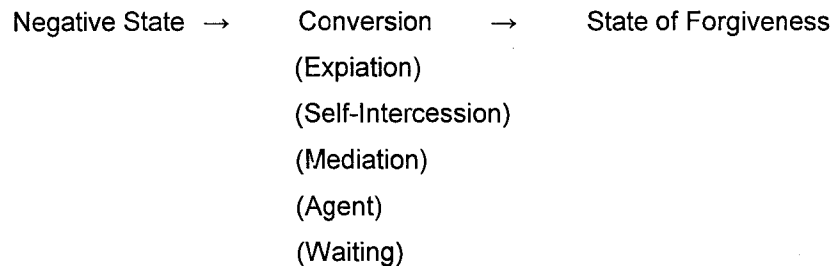
Divine actions come as the response to human actions, yet their nature is opposite. While people disrupt what was positive, good and healthy, God disrupts something evil and unhealthy; that is, situations that contradict his plans,

will, commandments and thus the very expression of himself, his nature and identity. From this perspective any disobedience to religious precepts, disregard for divinely promulgated ethics and morality, negligence of due cultic practices, or turning to other gods, constitute a direct assault on Yahweh, his status and his very nature. In this way Human Disruption (HD) forces Yahweh to react in order to protect and reinforce his own position and his laws which are the only guarantors of peace, prosperity, proper functionality and uninterrupted spiritual bond between God and his people. Alternatively stated, only strict adherence to Yahweh guarantees the continuance of the Original Positive State (OPS).

Yahweh allows the continuance of the Negative State (NS), having a clear purpose in mind. The NS is intended to stimulate, persuade or simply push the transgressor to **Conversion** (Repentance, Reformation), often implied in the verb *shuv*. The conversion is about awakening, realizing and turning away from committed evils. In many *rapha* verses a sincere conversion, a heartfelt regret and sorrow are expected before any restoration can take place. Sometimes, however, the conversion can mean a simple abandonment of evil actions because of the threat of severe divine punishment. The phase of Repentance is crucial not only for the people but also for God. He desires and awaits the moment when people change their lives, transform their thoughts and make their hearts open to receive the divine restoration (*rapha*). In spite of Yahweh's desire to restore and heal, people may remain obstinate and reject any persuasion toward repentance. This creates a dilemma for God since he will need to continue the punishment and prolong the existence of the NS. As prophetic texts

explain, it hurts God to see the suffering, misfortune and sickness of his people, yet even in his divine omnipotence he seems to be unable to release the power of *rapha* without prior human reformation.

Once the signs of Conversion (Repentance, Reformation) become visible the whole situation changes. In some cases as soon as repentance takes place God is ready to restore people to the positive state. Other times the transition from repentance to restoration involves additional elements such as self-intercession, mediation of a third party, expiation, intervention of a healing agent, and a period of waiting. These additional elements form an optional accompaniment to the conversion. While the presence of these optional components varies from one case to another, Conversion remains a necessary and constant prerequisite for the action of *rapha* to take place in the vast majority of biblical cases. Here is an illustration:



Conversion generates a new state that immediately precedes the restorative action of *rapha*. It is the **State of Forgiveness** (SF) where God forgives the Disruption of the Original Positive State. The State of Forgiveness stands in direct contrast to the State of Transgression.

As seen before, it was the Human Disruption (HD) that caused the State of Transgression (ST) punished with the Divine Disruption (DD). Here it is the human Conversion that produces the SF rewarded with the divine healing. The SF is a condition of being justified, in other words it is a state of justification. It allows the subjects who previously found themselves in the Negative State (NS) to become receptive and open for the action of *rapha*. Just as the ST implies an impending DD, here the SF implies a restorative action that may materialize at any time.

Repentance is a human action and it is received with a positive divine reaction; God responds with Forgiveness and subsequent Restoration. One needs to notice that this is the second time God responds to a human action. The first time it was a negative reaction after people disrupted the OPS through their Transgression; the response to this was punishment. Now, the second time God responds with forgiveness. In both situations the nature of human action has determined the character of the divine re-action. Man's Disruption (HD) called for and activated Divine Disruption (DD). Man's Conversion called for and activated divine Forgiveness. In these actions we can observe a two-directional force of the verb *shuv*. In order to be restored (*rapha*), man must turn (*shuv*) to God. Then after the human conversion (*shuv*), God returns (*shuv*) to man in order to restore him (*rapha*). Malachi 3:7 illustrates this idea: "Return to Me and I will return to you, says the Lord of Hosts," (שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם). Here is the linear representation of the two sets of human/divine actions and re-actions:

Transgression (negative human *action*) → causes → **Disruption** (negative divine *re-action*)
Conversion (positive human *action*) → causes → **Restoration** (positive divine *re-action*)

In the process of **Restoration** we can distinguish two separate ranges of the action of *rapha*, both related to the theological employment of the verb. In a technical lexical sense the action of the verb *rapha* applies only to the final transition between the State of Forgiveness (SF) and the Restored Positive State (RPS). That is the lexical range of *rapha*. However, theologically the concept of the action of *rapha* is more extensive. It can be identified as early as the moment when the Divine Disruption (DD) takes place. As noticed before, DD has a medicinal purpose in itself and therefore theologically the action of *rapha* begins here. The immediate goal of DD is to interrupt the State of Transgression (ST) through suffering, illness or misfortune in order to eventually restore people to the benefits of the positive state. The conceptual range of the action of *rapha* continues then through the stages of Negative State (NS), Conversion, State of Forgiveness (SF) on to the Restored Positive State (RPS). Here is the illustration:

Lexical range of *rapha* = a transition from SF → RPS

Theological range of *rapha* = a transition from DD → NS → Conversion → SF → RPS

As it was in the secular usage of *rapha*, also here in its theological version there is a difference between the Original Positive State (OPS) and the **Restored Positive State** (RPS). The full form critical pattern of the verb *rapha* lies

between those two states, namely the OPS and RPS. Yet, one must notice that this complete form critical pattern cannot be confused with either the lexical or the theological ranges of *rapha* discussed above. Thus even though the action of *rapha* has nothing to do with the Original Positive State (OPS), Human Disruption (HD) and the State of Transgression (ST), from the form critical perspective the OPS, HD, and ST are intrinsically related to the action of *rapha*. None of them (OPS, HD, ST) is optional or incidental for the logical justification of the action of *rapha*. Alternatively, even though the action of *rapha* is unconnected with OPS, HD, and ST, it presupposes their existence, just as the image of a dry river bed necessarily presupposes the idea of water flowing through it at a previous stage.

The difference between the Original Positive State (OPS) and the Restored Positive State (RPS) lies in the concept of something new (חדש). As mentioned before, the nature of the action of *rapha* has to do with a restoration to the original blueprint, ontological or conceptual state of initial proper functioning and good existence. It does not magically restore OPS after the Disruption has taken place but re-creates that state through several steps leading to the RPS. In general in the theological usage of *rapha*, the RPS seems to carry more benefits than the OPS. The Hebrew Bible often links the idea of the divine restoration with the concept of something new, *chadash*. For example, the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22), the new covenant (Jer 31:31),

new heart and new spirit (Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26), etc.¹ From this perspective the RPS has a qualitative advantage over the OPS. One could detect elements of irony and paradox. Just as the Divine Disruption bringing suffering and illness was perceived as medicine, the same thing happens in the case of the transition from OPS to the RPS. In order to improve over the original good creation, that is the OPS, it took a long theological chain of negative events that eventually culminated in the RPS. At this point one could speculate that if the OPS has been never disrupted by human disobedience then the restorative process would never be activated and consequently the new and improved positive state (RPS) would never become possible or real.²

The action of the verb *rapha*, as attested in the Hebrew Bible, relates mostly to the **Transition** (Transformation, Change, Re-Creation) of a spiritual nature. It implies God as the source and force of the transformation on the one hand, and on the other hand a person, either individual or collectivity, as the object of that transition. In many cases this transition from a negative to a positive state can be taken as a healing action. Yet, one needs to keep in mind that neither is *rapha* exclusively about healing, nor biblical healings are intrinsically linked to *rapha*. In other words, the quality of the action of *rapha* is a type of Transition (Transformation, Change, Re-Creation) that can be very well

¹ The writings of the New Testament have monopolized the idea of the Christ event as something totally new in the process of the divine restoration.

² A theological elaboration of a fall that resulted in a superior restoration has been preserved in the liturgy of the Holy Saturday in the Roman Catholic Church. It exults the "Felix Culpa," the felicitous disobedience of Adam (Gen 3) that led to the glorious salvation of Christ. The rationale for praising Adam's sin is that without it humanity would never be graced with the Incarnation of the Son of God nor experience the greatness of his noble redemptive work.

illustrated by a healing action. But, the character of *rapha* might be exemplified by other actions of a restorative nature that are not related to healing in a proper sense. At the very most they could be taken as healing in a metaphorical sense. Conversely, biblical healings taken as physical restorations of a human body to its proper condition or functioning might be unrelated to the verb *rapha*. For example some of the best-known physical healings in the Hebrew Bible display a notable absence of *rapha*. Among these are: healing of Rebecca (Gen 25:21), healing of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 13:1-6), healing of the son of a Sunammite woman (2 Kgs 4:18-37), healing of Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1-14), and others.

The Noun *marpe*

The noun *marpe* appears less frequently than the verb *rapha* in the texts of the Hebrew Bible. Its usage shows similarity to the employment of *rapha*, but there are also significant differences. Like the verb *rapha*, *marpe* also comes with the sequence of other theological concepts either explicit or implied. By this I mean the notion of transition from a negative to a positive state by the means of conversion. Yet, this evidence is limited to the Historical and Prophetic Books which constitute only one half of the total usage of the noun. I will refer to these occurrences of *marpe* in an abbreviated version as *marpe*^{HP} where the superscript letters "HP" stand for Historical and Prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. In these cases basic translation equivalents are healing, restoration, and remedy. Here from the form critical perspective *marpe*^{HP} displays the same

internal coherence and relational features as the verb *rapha*. Like *rapha* also *marpe*^{HP} may theologically relate to any and all of the stages within the sequence initiated with the Original Positive State (OPS) and finalized with the Restored Positive State (RPS). For this reason whenever in my conclusive remarks I speak about the form critical pattern of *rapha* I always imply the noun *marpe*^{HP}. Thus what is said about *rapha* applies to *marpe*^{HP} on the form critical level.

Wisdom literature contains the other half of the usage of *marpe*. I will refer to these instances in a short form as *marpe*^W where the superscript letter "W" stands for Wisdom literature, namely, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. From its occurrences in Wisdom literature it is very difficult to determine the precise meaning of *marpe*^W. While the traditional rendering of *marpe* as healing can be accepted, mostly in its metaphorical sense, it underestimates the vast semantic range of this noun. The context proves to be very helpful in deciding the meaning and translation possibilities for most of the *marpe*^{HP} occurrences yet it is not so with *marpe*^W. Consequently since the context is of little use, one is left with the choice of rendering *marpe*^W with traditionally accepted notions of healing, or establishing the meaning for each occurrence on the basis of the parallelisms in a given verse. The latter was my approach. Using the internal mechanisms of parallelisms I derived some meanings of *marpe*^W that overall stay in line with traditional renderings (healing), yet open larger lexical and theological perspectives, for example: life, peace, harmony, serenity, calmness, integrity, wholesomeness, strength, firmness, etc.

The noun *marpe*^W exhibits a different, perhaps a complementary, form critical pattern and cannot be equated with the linguistic shape of *rapha* and *marpe*^{HP}. The comparison and contrast between types and ranges of theological concepts ingrained in *rapha/marpe*^{HP} and *marpe*^W helps to develop a clear form critical picture of the latter.

While the granting of *rapha* indicates divine reward for conversion, with God playing the role of the active agent of the verb and a human being a passive recipient, the situation is different for *marpe*^W. Here it is the human being who is active and determines for himself or herself whether to benefit from *marpe* through right choices. God is either not mentioned in direct connection with *marpe*^W, or appears as a remote source or endorser of universal laws rendering to everyone according to his or her contribution.

In general, form critical patterns associated with *rapha* imply a dynamic character with the essential concept of transition. This is largely due to the fact that *rapha* is a verb and as such represents action. On the contrary, theological associations implied in the Form of *marpe*^W are more static in nature, emphasizing not the action but a state of being. This results mostly from the fact that *marpe* is a noun. Yet, the difference between the form critical structures of *rapha* and *marpe*^W cannot be explained merely on the basis of a contrast between a verb and a noun. As already mentioned, *rapha* and *marpe*^{HP} partake in the same form critical pattern even though one is a verb and the other is a noun. Thus the distinctiveness of *marpe*^W derives mostly from a different

theological focus and a different host of conceptual associations than those of *rapha* and *marpe*^{HP}.

In contrast to the majority of *rapha* passages, for *marpe*^W the concept of **Conversion** is not essential. Instead, the benefits of *marpe*^W come as rewards for good choices, a practical application of wisdom. Thus, individual **Choice** becomes the central notion in the form critical pattern of *marpe*^W. Also the idea of **Negative State** (NS) is different in both cases. While in the *rapha* verses the NS was the result of a series of negative transitions (disruptions) here the NS is the direct product of bad, or evil choice without mentioning any previous stages. In the *marpe*^W contexts the NS is not a resulting experience of the divine punishment (disruption) but the outcome of individual choice where a person cuts himself off *marpe*.

Negative State ← bad ← **CHOICE** → good → *Marpe*^W

One can discern different theological models associated with usages of *rapha* and *marpe*^W. The employment of the verb suggests a pedagogical model with divine supervision. It is God who directly punishes (disrupts) and rewards (heals) human behavior. Man plays the role of a passive recipient of the benefits of *rapha* after he has fulfilled and satisfied specific requirements (Conversion). In this way *rapha* represents a restorative quality. The situation is different for instances with *marpe*^W. Here we encounter a model based on individual responsibility, freedom and choice. Man is an active executive of *marpe* for himself. It is the human being who is totally in charge of his or her well-being.

Through the application of wisdom, humankind can reach, produce and maintain the Positive State of *marpe*. Conversely, the experience of a Negative State comes as a self-inflicted punishment. In this way *marpe*^W reveals an Aspirational quality where the attainment of healing, health, well-being, strength, vitality, life, etc., remains within the power and the reach of an individual. As we have seen in the *rapha* verses God was the only source, force and grantor of the beneficial action of the restorative verb. In contrast, the form critical model ingrained in *marpe*^W places God as the remote source and distant enforcer of universal laws which render to man according to his choices. This model presupposes the idea expressed in the books of Genesis and Deuteronomy that a human being has the knowledge of good and evil, both good and evil are placed before him and it is up to him to choose what is good (Gen 2:9, 17, 3:5; 22; Deut 30:19). Thus, the teaching offered in the model associated with *rapha* might be paraphrased as “Yahweh is your only healer and He will heal you as soon as you convert” while the instruction deduced from *marpe*^W might be expressed as “You are your only healer; choose your healing now.”

While *rapha* indicates a chain of theological actions and stages between the Original Positive State (OPS) and the Restored Positive State (RPS), the linguistic shape of *marpe*^W implies only one Positive State (PS). Unlike in *rapha* cases, here there is no notion of transition from a Negative State (NS) to a PS. There are only two mutually exclusive states that a human being can reach, namely the PS and the NS. From this perspective the idea of a PS coincides with the reality of *marpe*^W.

Positive State = *Marpe*^W

The OPS has never been broken and the RPS has never been granted through a merciful divine restoration. In fact the two ideas of OPS and RPS present in the *rapha* patterns become only one conceptually undivided notion of a PS when it comes to the form critical structure of *marpe*^W. In this sense *marpe*^W (= PS) is a continuous present reality in which a human being may or may not participate according to his or her choices. The NS does not logically and temporarily precede the PS as in the examples offered by *rapha*. For this reason the PS (*marpe*^W) coexists with the NS, both being a potentiality that materializes through a choice (good, or bad) of an individual. As mentioned before, conceptually, *marpe*^W (PS) includes OPS and RPS, but also it might be represented by general notions of what is good; *shalom*, for example. The difficulty of assigning a precise lexical equivalent for *marpe*^W is not coincidental. As seen in previous sections, *marpe*^W could be translated as healing, life, health, peace, harmony, serenity, calmness, composure, tranquility, integrity, wholesomeness, strength, fortitude, courage, etc. When one analyzes *marpe*^W in the context of two opposite realities of good and evil (Gen 2:9, 17, 3:5; 22; Deut 30:19) then *marpe*^W can assume the identity of a host of specific nouns associated with the good, positive side of choice. At the same time, *marpe*^W may serve as an opposite term for a number of concepts associated with the evil side of choice, for example rottenness, foolishness, discord, etc. This explains the lexical fluidity and semantic vagueness of *marpe*^W which must not be confused with the precise form critical shape of this noun.

Chapter 5

Toward a Central Concept of Hebrew Bible Theology

At this point I would like to propose the form critical structure derived from *rapha* as a central, and potentially *the* central, organizational and interpretive principle for the OT theology.¹ To be sure, I'm not suggesting that the sole idea of healing/restoration whenever drawn from the verb *rapha* or the noun *marpe*^{HP} constitutes a theological kernel of the OT. Instead it is the entire linguistic shape, pattern of relationships, sequence of theological concepts and ingrained recurring references carried by *rapha/marpe*^{HP} that offer a comprehensive interpretational paradigm for the OT theology.

The quest for a kernel idea or a center that would function as the organizational key for the OT Theology was advanced by the proponents of the so-called "Cross-Section Method."² Walther Eichrodt saw the covenant between God and Israel as the central category governing themes and theological perspectives of the Hebrew Bible.³ Gerhard Hasel argued that the center for the

¹ As already mentioned both *rapha* and *marpe*^{HP} exhibit the same form critical shape. The frequency of *rapha* however is more than ten times higher than that of *marpe*^{HP}. Also the verb presents a much greater transparency of its form critical pattern than the noun. For this reason when I am proposing the form critical pattern of *rapha* as a central concept for the OT theology I also imply the eight occurrences of *marpe* in the Historical and Prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible (*marpe*^{HP}).

² For a brief discussion of the "cross-section" method and theologies of the "center" one may refer to James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 337-44; and George W. Coats, "Theology of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters* (ed. D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 239-62.

³ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J.A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961).

OT theology should be seen in the concept of God.⁴ For Walther Zimmerli the central motif in the OT theology was the name of God, that is YHWH, or more precisely the experience of divine grace emanating from the reality standing behind the tetragrammaton.⁵ Samuel Terrien argued that “the elusive presence” of God in his relationship with the people of Israel was the conceptual center of the OT theology.⁶ Other theological centers were suggested as well.⁷

Form critical paradigm obtained from the analysis of the action of *rapha* appears as a preeminent interpretational model for the understanding of the theological reasoning of the Hebrew Bible. I have identified eight states or stages – Original Positive State (OPS), Human Disruption (HD), State of Transgression (ST), Divine Disruption (DD), Negative State (NS), Conversion, State of Forgiveness (SF), Restored Positive State (RPS) – that either directly or implicitly relate to the action of *rapha*. Two major types of forces interact between these eight states. First, it is the contrasting force (opposition, tension) as between the ST and the SF. Second, it is the force of causation (action/reaction, cause/effect) existing, for example, between HD and DD. Additionally each of the eight states or stages allows a host of subordinate theological

⁴ Gerhard Hasel, “The Problem of the Center in the Old Testament Debate,” ZAW 86 (1974): 65-82.

⁵ Walther Zimmerli, “Zum Problem der ‘Mitte des Alten Testaments,’” EvT 35 (1975): 97-118.

⁶ Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

⁷ See Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 337-44.

themes. For example the state of Conversion includes such motifs as Repentance, Expiation, Intercession, Self-intercession, Mediation, etc. It seems to me that one may approach and understand the core of theological subjects of the Hebrew Bible from the perspective of *rapha* and its patterns. Even more, most of the logic of the theological thinking of the OT lies within the framework of *rapha* and its accompanying elements. From Creation, covenants, Law, through political upheavals, prophetic activities, national and personal disasters, Exile, promises of restoration up to eschatological and apocalyptic visions of the OT literature, the form critical ranges of *rapha* can be used as the key to explain and understand paradigms and rationale of the theology of the Hebrew Bible. Almost any concept, any idea, found on the pages of the OT can be interpreted within form critical patterns ingrained in the action of *rapha*. The verb *rapha* is therefore a carrier of ingrained recurring references that evoke other theological themes. The extent and the nature of these references support the idea that the form critical pattern of *rapha* reveals the central and governing logic of OT theology. If one asked for the thought of the OT in a nutshell, the patterns of relationships offered by *rapha* would certainly provide an outstanding model. The linguistic shape of the action of *rapha* provides a key for the understanding of the Hebrew Bible theology regardless of where the initial theological investigation started (sin, punishment, promises, etc.). The identified eight stages intrinsically related to the action of *rapha* constitute a theological compass that enables the reader to locate himself or herself within the forest of religious thought of Israel and to accurately identify the previous and the subsequent state. For example, if one

starts theological reflection on the text speaking about Conversion it is obvious that this stage is located between the NS and the SF. Similarly, taking the form critical pattern of *rapha* as the point of reference, one will easily identify what other stages must have preceded and may follow the stage of Conversion. In other words, for the most part the theology of the Hebrew Bible is predictable since it is based on the structural elements ingrained in the action of *rapha*.

Finally, theological realities obtained through form critical patterns of *rapha/marpe*^{HP} and *marpe*^W are not a brand new revelation of the theology of the Hebrew Bible. The subjects of sin, transgression, punishment, restoration, two ways, choice between good and evil, etc., can be, and have been, studied from other perspectives and points of departure. What the results of this study have accomplished is the identification of an organizational structural center for the OT theology where the form critical itineraries of *rapha/marpe*^{HP} and *marpe*^W have given a new paradigm of interpretational logic to the religious thought of the Hebrew Bible.

PART II

HEALING PATTERNS OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Introduction

Among all the writings of the New Testament the three Synoptic Gospels offer the largest number of narratives and references to the healing activity of Jesus.¹ Accordingly for the purpose of this study I have limited my focus of detecting, analyzing and evaluating form critical finds of *rapha/marpe* to the healing acts of Jesus and the general restorative concepts of the first three Evangelists. The subject of Jesus' healing miracles is certainly not new to biblical scholarship.² Various perspectives have been adopted and numerous volumes written on the topic discussing gospel healings either as a part of other

¹ There are eighteen healing accounts in the Synoptic Gospels. For the complete list see the chart "Synoptic Healing Narratives" in the Appendix. The number of healing miracles, however, depends on the methodology of counting. For example, the healing of two blind men mentioned in Mt 9:27-31 and Mt 20:29-34 might be either a reference to the same or to two distinct restorations. For detailed statistics about NT healings one may refer to the work of John Wilkinson, *Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1980), 19-29.

² Among modern-day general treatments of gospel miracles including introductory matters one may consult Hendrik van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 8; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965); Xavier Léon-Dufour, ed., *Les Miracles de Jésus selon le Nouveau Testament* (Parole de Dieu; Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977); René Latourelle, *Miracles de Jésus et Théologie du Miracle* (Recherches nouvelle série 8; Montréal: Bellarmin, 1986); and John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (Vol. 2. Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1994). Preoccupied with the issues of historicity and the Historical Jesus, Meier in evaluating the works of van der Loos and Latourelle says: "[both books] suffer from a lack of clarity about their positions on the Synoptic problem and hence on the use of the criterion of multiple attestation of sources (multiple versions do not automatically equal multiple sources). Both works also suffer from a strong apologetic tone, marked by claims that are not supported by evidence." Meier, *A Marginal Jew*. 2:671.

In 1974 Gerd Theissen published his German edition of a form critical approach to miracle stories of the NT where he concentrated on "motifs," "themes," and miracle stories as symbolic actions. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (trans. F. McDonagh; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). Among less extensive works of general character on miracles in the NT are: Alan Richardson, *Miracle Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM Press, 1966); and Reginald H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963).

miraculous activities of Jesus or as an autonomous subject.³ After all, Jesus' restorative activity, including healings and exorcisms, appears as one of the most defining and memorable features of his gospel portrayal.

³ A defense of miracles as "one of the essential features of the oldest portrait of Christ" against liberal theology and form critical assaults came from the 1925 French publication of Anton Fridrichsen, *The Problem of Miracle in Primitive Christianity* (trans. R. A. Harrisville and J. S. Hanson; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972). Harold Remus offered a few informative studies dedicated to the subject of Jesus' healings and Christian miracle in the early stages of post-NT movements and literature: Harold Remus, "Does Terminology Distinguish Early Christian from Pagan Miracles?" *JBL* 101 (1982): 531-51; *Jesus as Healer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983). Another important contribution on the status and theological developments in the understanding of Christian healing came from R. J. S. Barrett-Lennard, *Christian Healing after the New Testament: Some Approaches to Illness in the Second, Third and Fourth Centuries* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994). The interpretation of Jesus' miracles in the context of Hellenistic "divine man" (theios aner) as well as the notions of *aretai*, *dynameis*, *thaumasta*, *terata* and the pagan Christian theological conflict of the first centuries are well presented in two books: Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus* (SBL Dissertation Series 64; Chico: Scholars Press, 1982); and Gail Paterson Corrington, *The 'Divine Man': His Origin and Function in Hellenistic Popular Religion* (American University Studies. Series 7. Theology and Religion 17; New York: Peter Lang, 1986).

An overview of literary and theological issues related to sickness, health, and healing in the Old Testament, Intertestamental literature, and the NT are discussed in Larry Hogan, *Healing in the Second Temple [sic] Period* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 21; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992); also Klaus Seybold, and Ulrich B. Mueller, *Sickness and Healing* (trans. D. W. Stott, Biblical Encounters Series; Nashville: Abingdon, 1981). Jewish context of Jesus' miraculous and healing activities also received due scholarly attention particularly in the recent study of Eric Eve. His study surveys the status of miracles in Josephus, Philo, Wisdom literature, Pseudo-Philo, Enochic writings, Qumran, Jewish miracle-workers and exorcists and miracles in the Second Temple Literature: Eric Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles* (Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 231; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002). Werner Kahl assessed Synoptic miracle stories against their Jewish and pagan backgrounds thinking that "the synoptic miracle stories as narratives reflect the cultural environment and belief-systems of the narrators more accurately than they provide reliable historical information about the activities of Jesus of Nazareth." Werner Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in Their Religious-Historical Setting: A Religionsgeschichtliche Comparison from a Structural Perspective* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 11-12. Various aspects of Greco-Roman cultural and religious surroundings of the gospel miracles have been discussed by Howard Kee including the cult of Asclepius, Isis, miracles in relation to apocalyptic tradition, miracle in history and romance as well as miracle as universal symbol: Howard Clark Kee, *Miracles in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983).

Sociological and anthropological approaches to Jesus' healings and evolution of Christianity from the perspective of its impact on health care come from the studies of two authors marked by quite noticeable mutual (academic) animosity: Hector Avalos, *Health Care and the Rise of Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999); and John Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,

If one looks for a unifying theological principle between the Old and New Testaments the linguistic structure of *rapha* is an excellent candidate. From this perspective Christian theological outlook did not alter, and by no means replaced, the theological pattern of the OT revealed by the linguistic and conceptual structure of the action of *rapha*. Just the opposite, the Jesus-event is perfectly conformable with theological logic engrained in *rapha*. Jesus appears at the point of the Negative State indicating the situation where the world is alienated from God, sick in spirit and corrupted in soul, immersed in sinfulness, darkness, and pervaded with oppressive spiritual powers. In other words the world is in great need of a drastic and mighty restorative action. Jesus urges and invites people to undertake Conversion (*metanoia*) and through his self-sacrifice gains the State of Forgiveness (justification) that results in spiritual Restoration (salvation) experienced already in this *new* life. The beneficiaries of the Restoration will not enjoy its fullness until the arrival of the Restored Positive State of spiritual reunification with God that will take place in the eschatological future after the death of the physical body.

The above remarks refer to the form critical patterns of the unit *rapha/marpe*^{HP}. Yet, the idea of Choice as implied in the form critical structure of *marpe*^W can be easily detected in the writings of the NT as well. Here the reality of *marpe*^W (Positive State) is illustrated by the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God as opposite to the Negative State with its realities of hell,

2000). Social impacts of Christian healings are also discussed by Gary Ferngren, "Early Christianity as a Religion of Healing," *BHM* 66 (1992): 1-18.

Satan, evil, sickness, sin, etc. The Negative State is the kingdom of Satan (Mt 12:26; Lk 11:18) that stands in radical opposition to the Kingdom of God. The above are just general similarities between the OT healing patterns and Jesus' healing activities. As we approach restorative narratives of the first three Gospels we will see how and to what degree their theology relates to the restorative theology of *rapha* and *marpe* in the Hebrew Bible. Textual evidence will offer support for the assertion that the healing theology of the Synoptics coincides with theological trajectories delineated by form critical patterns of *rapha* and *marpe*. Yet, at certain points the Synoptic restorative ideas diverge from the Old Testament patterns thus creating their own particular conception of healing, its meaning, phases, kinds, and theology. Unless otherwise specified in this section the expressions "Jesus' theology" and the "Synoptic theology" indicate the same thing. Therefore speaking of Jesus I mean the Synoptic Jesus without differentiating or speculating which parts of the gospel narratives might or might not go back to the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth.⁴

⁴ In his 1997 article, Larry Hurtado evaluated the status of "The oceanic amount of scholarly work germane to historical-Jesus research." In reviewing the results of the previous decade (1984-93) Hurtado focused on the selected eight scholars who had written on the subject of the historical Jesus: E. P. Sanders, G. Vermes, B. Witherington, J. Meier, M. Borg, R. Horsley, S. Freyne, J. D. Crossan. Assessing the situation Hurtado stated: "One certainly cannot speak of an emerging consensus. There are differences in the evidence chosen for framing Jesus' historical background, differences in what one sees as more influential in Jesus' historical matrix, differences in whether to use religious concepts and categories or social-scientific ones to understand Jesus (and, if the latter are chosen, which ones to emphasize), differences over the dating and evaluation and identification of Christian sources (intra- and extra-canonical, extant and prophetic), and certainly differences in the personal hermeneutical agendas.... In that sense, therefore, if one hopes for some assured and representative results, the most current wave of historical-Jesus work can be judged collectively to have failed." L. Hurtado, "A Taxonomy of Recent Historical-Jesus Work," in *Whose Historical Jesus?* (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 7. Ed. W. E. Arnal and M. Desjardins. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 291. As of 2006 the situation has not changed much. While theories and

speculations about the historical Jesus are in large supply there is little progress in presenting academically convincing and commonly accepted results.

Chapter 1

Pre-Restoration Stages in Jesus' Activity

Jesus' action of theological restoration begins at the stage which we have previously identified as the Negative State (NS) according to form critical ranges of *rapha*. From this point on, the Synoptic writers as well as the rest of the NT view Jesus as a mighty Agent of God who dedicated himself to the spiritual restoration of humankind. This divine agency of Jesus appears throughout his earthly ministry as well as in his eschatological functions.¹ Yet, the theology of Jesus' healings does not and cannot logically begin at the point of the NS or his arrival into the human history. Since the action of healing/restoration, to retain its meaning and logic, requires previous stages and sets of events (historical or

¹ The theme of divine agency is certainly not unique to the NT representation of Jesus. The Hebrew Bible, Deuterocanonical writings, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha as well as Philo of Alexandria understood various individuals (e.g., the Patriarchs, Moses, Prophets, angels) or concepts (Torah, Wisdom, Logos) as mediators between God and his people. At times these agents of God were involved in physical healings of individuals or groups, but most frequently their agency would entail health and healing in the spiritual dimension. That meant above all a harmonious relationship between people of Israel and their Deity. However, the closest analogy to Jesus' healing activity does not come from the Jewish environment. Instead it comes from the figure of the Greco-Roman god of healing, Asclepius. Extensive parallels can be drawn between the Synoptic healings of Jesus and the healing acts of the mythical "Lover of Humankind." Striking similarities involve their personal status, lives, deaths, elements of deifications, healing methods, linguistic parallels in the healing texts, multiple conceptual parallels, love for humankind, worship, etc. Among abundant literature on Asclepius and Jesus one may refer to: Emma J. Edelstein, and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (2 vols. With a New Introduction by G. B. Ferngren. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Louise Wells, *The Greek Language of Healing from Homer to New Testament Times* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998); René Josef Rüttimann, "Asclepius and Jesus: The Form, Character and Status of the Asclepius Cult in the Second-Century CE and its Influence on Early Christianity" (Ph.D diss., Harvard University, 1986); Antoine Duprez, *Jésus et les dieux guérisseurs* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 12; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1970); Walter Addison Jayne, *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1962); S. Vernon McCasland, "The Asklepios Cult in Palestine," *JBL* 58 (1939): 221-27.

conceptual), also the theological interpretation of Jesus' restorations needs to start with what took place before the NS came into existence.

As we will see, the Synoptic idea of restoration is not confined to the instances of healings involving human bodies and minds. These are only visible manifestations of the colossal universal Restoration carried out by the Christ of God through the successful completion of his divine agency. Various aspects of the Synoptic ideas concerning the restoration of humankind, individually and collectively, will become gradually more evident and systematic as we scrutinize individual restorative miracles. By restorative miracles I mean both physical and spiritual healings as well as exorcisms.² At this point we are ready to begin our examination of the healings and the restorative theology of the Synoptic Jesus in the framework of form critical trajectories of *rapha/marpe*.

² Various divisions of Jesus' miracles have been proposed. For example in his work on the Historical Jesus Gerd Theissen groups the miracles into two groups of threes. The first group relates to the historical Jesus (Exorcisms, Therapies, Norm miracles) while the second group presupposes Easter faith (Deliverance miracles, Gift miracles and Epiphanies). Theissen comments on the relation between the two groups of miracles: "The exorcisms stand opposite deliverance miracles: on the one hand the power of a demon is broken; on the other the power of wind and waves. The therapies stand over against the gift miracles; on the one hand physical weakness is removed and on the other material want. The norm miracles stand opposite epiphanies; on the one hand the divine will is manifested and on the other a divine being. We can assume that exorcisms, therapies and norm miracles originate in the historical Jesus." Gerd Theissen, and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (trans. J. Bowden. London: SCM Press, 1998), 296. In his second volume of *A Marginal Jew* John Meier discusses miracles under four categories: Jesus' Exorcisms, Jesus' Healings, Raising the Dead, and the So-Called Nature Miracles.

Original Positive State in Jesus' Teaching

Jesus' teaching and activities presuppose the existence of the Original Positive State (OPS). As we have seen during the analysis of *rapha* in the OT section, the form critical pattern of the verb implied the existence of the original condition or state that somehow suffered disruption and consequently needed restoration or healing. Without the existence or presupposition of that OPS the action of *rapha* would completely lose its meaning. In other words no restoration or healing can take place unless something was previously existing in its unbroken form and proper functioning. The OPS was not always directly referred to in the fragments containing *rapha*. Yet, it was always implied in the form critical range of the verb. Sometimes the OPS seemed to be referring to the original good condition of everything at the time of Creation. Other times, the OPS might indicate a harmonious relationship between Yahweh and his people as designed through the Covenant and the Law. We have also observed that the idea of OPS has no need for a temporal or historical localization at a specific event such as Creation or Covenant. Rather it might be an abstract concept according to which everything functions according to the original design of God. This means that everything functions properly, as God intended, without any disruption and therefore it remains harmonious and wholesome. Such an understanding of the OPS transcends historical and temporal categories and might relate to the present moment of the ongoing relationship between an

individual devotee or a religious group and their Deity. In this way, the OPS might be referring to the spiritual harmony between God and a human being.

Jesus of the Gospels keeps in the background of his words and deeds the idea of the OPS. Sometimes he may even explicitly be referring to this concept by speaking of how things used to be in their proper healthy state in the past or how they should be in order to restore their meaning and functionality as it was divinely intended. In his teaching on divorce Jesus relativizes Moses' prescription, that is the Law, permitting a husband to dismiss his wife after giving her a bill of divorce (Mk 10:2-9). In this case, the Law doesn't have the ultimate authority for Jesus since its formulation, in this specific case, was no more than a compromise resulting from people's hardness of heart. Instead, Jesus refers to the beginning of Creation (ἀπὸ δὲ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως, Mk 10:6) when the true intent of God was different, that is, to have the husband and the wife joined together, inseparably, as one (Mk 10:7-9). What happens in this story is that Jesus overrides traditional practice supported by authoritative Law in order to recover the original divine intention. This is exactly the meaning of the OPS, namely the primordial divine intention. Since the primeval design of God featuring the husband and wife as an undivided unit was broken, apparently through the hardness of human hearts, the marital situation is in disarray and needs restoration to what it was meant to be. The important thing is here that Jesus brings up the beginning (ἀρχή) as the authoritative referent for moral evaluation. The Greek translation of the OT linguistically confirms Jesus' mentioning of Creation since in both texts the same word ἀρχή is used: "In the beginning God

made...” (ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς..., Gen 1:1).³ It is there, in Genesis, that the moral qualification of the entire handiwork of God takes place: everything was *very good* (καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησεν καὶ ἰδοὺ καλὰ λίαν, Gen 1:31). The value of thus-understood beginning (ἀρχή) lies not only in being a helpful reference for the divorce discourse, but, as seen above, implies *everything* (τὰ πάντα, Gen 1:31) and that *everything* was *very good* (καλὰ λίαν, Gen 1:31) at that phase. Consequently, the *beginning* constitutes an axiological reference that can be applied to any or all practical situations when moral evaluation is needed. This is one major meaning of the OPS.

Another reference to the OPS emerges from the discussion on the Sabbath observance (Mk 2:23-28). One more time Jesus transcends the common understanding of the Law and comes with a new interpretation asserting “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath,” (Mk 2:27). What are the bases of Jesus’ argument? He is authoritatively referring to a principle that is not written in the Law, and not even explicit in the Creation, if Creation is taken as the formation of the material world. Jesus points to this principle using scriptural analogies from the life of David (Mk 2:25-27) and in another place he offers a hypothetical scenario where one needs to pull out a sheep from the pit on a Sabbath day (Mt 12:11-12). On what basis does Jesus exclaim “how much more valuable (διαφέρω) is man than sheep,”? (Mk 12:12). It is again the

³ When the Markan Jesus speaks about *arche* it is different from the reference to the *arche* in the Johannine prologue. For John the usages of *arche* (ἐν ἀρχῇ, Jn 1-2) refer to the phase of the pre-existence of the Logos. This means that the Johannine *arche* might be taken in the absolute sense – it is the state preceding the material creation – while for Mark the *arche* indicates the initial stage of the material world.

reference to the principle, the original divine design, that in the mind of the Synoptic Jesus indicates a state or an ideal when everything is, was, or will be good and wholesome. Thus, this is another example of the OPS attestation in Jesus' teaching.

The OPS might be seen also in instances when Jesus gives his own interpretation of the Law.⁴ Expressions such as "you have heard" (Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη) "but I tell you," (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, Mt 5:21-22, etc.) exemplify another of Jesus' references to something higher than the Law.⁵ The authority with which Jesus speaks suggests that he is the one who perceives and understands the mind of God as the only source from which the correct and final explanation of

⁴ Alan Watson postulates that Jesus' relation to the Law and its interpretation might be understood better if approached from the perspective of ethics: "Jesus' interest is in ethical behaviour of a *higher order* [emphasis mine] that that contained in the law." He argues that for Jesus "the force of the law was in its ethical content, and this he continually stressed. He had little interest in ritual observances whose ethical content was unclear – such as dietary restrictions and other aspects of purity – and saw strict Sabbath observance as objectionable when it hampered doing good." Watson, *Jesus and the Law* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 123, 126-27. The notion of a "higher order" of an ethical nature as the foundation of the Law partly coincides with my conception of the OPS. It needs to be said, however, that the OPS is not limited to the matters of ethics. Rather ethics are only a part of the original plan of God.

⁵ In discussing Jesus' attitude to the Jewish Law Rudolf Schnackenburg refers to an authoritative concept transcending the Mosaic legislation using such terms as: "God's original will," "the will of God in its original sense," "the divine will as embodied... in the law of Sinai," the will of God in "its true and original sense," "the absolute will of God," "God' original intention," or just "God's will." Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), 57-65. Schnackenburg seems to be referring to the primeval will of God, which is synonymous with my concept of OPS, from an ethical and moral perspective. In this sense he would have Jesus as the revealer of that OPS: "Jesus was aware of having been sent to reveal the will of God in its original sense and clarify it on doubtful points with divine authority, and where necessary to state and promulgate it afresh definitively." (p. 59). Whenever Jesus upholds the validity and the binding force of the Law it is so, according to Schnackenburg, because the OT legislation "enshrined the will of God and awaited interpretation of its true and original sense." (p. 60). For this reason Jesus "lays the foundations of a new morality, in fact, re-lays anew the foundations of ethics." (p. 63).

the Law may come. The mind of God, or his intention, offers another illustration of the OPS in Jesus' religious disputes.

A further example of the OPS transpiring through Jesus' teaching comes from his identification with a physician (Mk 2:15-17). After asserting "those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick," Jesus affirms "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners," (Mk 2:17). His answer comes in response to the Pharisaic reproach condemning him for eating with sinners. Obviously, the state of being sick implies a previous condition of being healthy. Being healthy is a positive state whereas being ill means the negative state. In his response Jesus allegorizes the meaning of sickness which serves as a metaphor for sin. Consequently, the Negative State (NS) is the state of spiritual sickness, that is sin. The positive state lies on the opposite side, the wholesome one, and means the absence of sin. In Jesus' approach the absence of sin appears as the characteristic of the OPS. It was a state, either real or ideal but divinely intended, in which the relationship between humankind and God was not or should not be obstructed by sin.

Jesus as the Son of Man comes to seek and save what was lost (ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός, Lk 19:10). The condition of being lost and in need of salvation implies that there was at a certain point another condition where the grammatical object was not lost or in need of help. Back then things were functioning properly until, for some reason, a disruption took place and a loss occurred. There are two ideas here standing in direct contrast: the concepts of being lost (ἀπόλλυμι) and of being found (εὕρισκω). More illustrations come from

other verses. For example, the story of the Prodigal Son (τὴν ἀπολωλὼς, Lk 15:24), the Lost Coin (τὴν δραχμὴν ἣν ἀπώλεσα, Lk 15:9), the Parable of the Lost Sheep (τὸ ἀπολωλός, Lk 16:6), the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel (τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα, Mt 15:24). In this sense, the OPS is equal with the pre-loss, or pre-being-lost condition.

Despite the fact that on various occasions Jesus surpasses the Sinaitical Covenant and its Law, in order to point to another principle of a greater authority, the Law still retains its significance. There are instances when Jesus takes the teaching of the Law in a sense of OPS. From this perspective the Law embodies the divine intention of regulating and structuring harmonious relationships between God and the people as well as the affairs of people among themselves. For example when questioned about how to attain eternal life Jesus answers by asking “What is written in the Law? How do you read?” (Lk 10:26). A statement of colossal theological importance comes with Jesus’ assertion that he did not arrive to abolish the Law but to fulfill it (οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι, Mt 5:17). Thus, the Law may still function as the expression of OPS as long as people comply with requirements of the Law. However, in the face of human weakness and sinfulness the requirements of the Law can no longer provide a satisfactory embodiment or expression of the OPS. For this reason Jesus needs to fulfill the Law in order to give to it the fuller meaning and the correct interpretation. It is important to notice that the Law is not seen as the OPS but as *an* expression or embodiment of the OPS. Similarly, Creation was another expression of the OPS, but not the OPS itself. That is because while the

Creation, Covenant and Law have temporal character and historical connotations, the OPS is a concept that is ahistorical and atemporal. The above examples support the argument that the Synoptic Jesus had in mind the OPS as a theological concept. The concept of OPS can be anchored to a historical temporal event such as the Creation of the material world but in its nature the OPS is an atemporal notion indicating wholesome existence and proper functioning in harmony with the primordial divine plan.

In the form critical pattern of *rapha* I indicated that according to the logical sequence after the OPS comes another series of events. Namely, these are Human Disruption (HD), then the State of Transgression (ST), Divine Disruption (DD) and finally the appearance of the Negative State (NS). Yet, in the Synoptic Jesus teaching there is no clear distinction between these four stages. Even though there might be traces of such a distinction, somehow the four stages identified in the *rapha* pattern become one negative state or condition in the theological perspective of the Synoptists. The fact that in Jesus' teaching we have only one Negative State (NS) might be due to the appearance on the theological scene of a new critical concept, that is Satan. While this figure is rather marginal in the OT it has become quite central in the early Christian theology. In the subsequent sections we will further discuss the implications and the influence of the figure of Satan on the healing patterns of the first three Gospels.

Negative State in Jesus' Teaching

In the *rapha* passages the ultimate responsibility for the disruption of the OPS rests on human beings. Thus, I called it a Human Disruption (HD) of the divinely created and established OPS. Humans were directly liable for such an outcome. Their violation resulted in entering into the State of Transgression (ST) that provoked divine wrath and caused a violent Divine Disruption (DD) of what was created by HD. By the times of Jesus and the composition of the Gospels the figure of Satan and demons have received rather an extensive elaboration in the Jewish Intertestamental literature as well as in Greco-Roman writings. Thus, while the form critical pattern of *rapha* once pointed to humans as the only entity responsible for the disruption of the divinely established OPS, now the liability has shifted to Satan. Intertestamental Jewish literature certainly provided a smooth transition for the views of the Old Testament to acquire new dimensions in the New Testament. For example, the deuterocanonical Book of Wisdom, written approximately 100 B.C., offers important insights regarding both the OPS and its disruption and the notion of NS. These deuterocanonical reflections are a little different than the typical OT patterns seen in the usage of *rapha*.

According to the writer of the Book of Wisdom God formed man to be imperishable (ἐπ' ἀφθαρσίᾳ) and to function as the image of His own nature (εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ἀϊδιότητος), (Wis 2:23). That certainly corresponds to the idea of the OPS in which a human being was eternal and reflected the qualities of his creator. The same book comments on the Disruption and the NS: "but by the

envy (φθόνῳ) of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it,” (Wis 2:24). These theological explanations of the OPS, Disruption and NS, were certainly available and probably common in the times of Jesus and the Synoptic compositions. Thus, the Book of Wisdom lessens human responsibility for the ceasing of the OPS and labels Satan as the principal cause and the agent of Disruption. It is interesting to observe that, unlike the Synoptic Jesus, Pauline theology places much of the responsibility for Disruption, if not most of it, on humankind.

Paul locates the disruption of the OPS in Adam’s disobedience and for him it is rightly a human disruption (HD). It was the sin, or the first sin, that humankind committed in Adam thus opening for death the gates of the world and human life (Rom 5:12). Consequently everybody sinned in Adam and everybody died in him (1 Cor 5:12). Since all have sinned (πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον, Rom 3:23) all human beings are liable before God and they fall short of his glory (καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, Rom 3:23). This is the State of Transgression (ST) that demands divine punishment and disruption (DD). Through Human Disruption (HD) people brought upon themselves divine wrath and became enemies of God (Rom 5:9-10). Pauline thought continues with the divine reconciliation, justification, and restoration/healing obtained through Jesus’ sacrifice and salvation. This Pauline theological thinking perfectly follows the form critical steps of *rapha*. In summary in Paul there is HD, ST, DS and NS. This is absent in Jesus, however. One receives the impression that for Paul,

even though theoretically Satan is the primary disruptive force of the OPS, every human being carries a load of responsibility and liability for Adam's disobedience.

The Jesus of the Gospels, in contrast to Paul, doesn't directly place responsibility for the Disruption of the OPS on human beings. Rather, in his views the primary responsibility might be traced to the Devil's envy that caused all the trouble (Wis 2:24). Certainly, Jesus uses severe language in regards to individual violators of God's commandments either in the past or his contemporaries, and announces eschatological punishment for the unrepentant evildoers, but there is no thought of collective responsibility for the Disruption of the OPS. Rather, Jesus' focus seems to be on the miserable present condition of humankind (namely the NS), that is, living under the dominion of Satan, death, suffering and being distant from God. What we find more in Jesus' teaching is not the emphasis on responsibility, liability and punishment, but zooming in on the results of the original Transgression, that is, widespread dominion of Satan and sin.⁶ Jesus acts more like a doctor whose paramount interest is in healing wounds instead of investigating how they came about or who is responsible and liable for the ruptured condition. He has come not to judge, punish, or disrupt but

⁶ In his analysis of "sin" in the NT Walter Grundmann encapsulates Jesus' attitude toward sin in a twofold statement: "First, that Jesus did not speak of sin and its nature and consequences, but was conscious of its reality (e.g., in the Sermon on the Mount) and acted accordingly, and second, that in His acts and sayings He was conscious of being the Victor over sin... The parable of the Prodigal Son who goes to his father and confesses: *πάτερ, ἡμαρτον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐνώπιόν σου* (Lk. 15:18, 21). The parable shows us what Jesus understands by sin. It is going out from the father's house, i.e., godlessness and remoteness from God working itself out in a life in the world with all its desires and its filth. The event achieved through the coming of Jesus is recognition of this sin and conversion to God.... On the basis of this twofold knowledge Jesus does not speak of sin but proclaims God as the Father in His lordship, conscious that this proclamation goes right home to the sin which consists both in godlessness and in guilt towards one's neighbour.... He knows that he is sent to those who live in guilt far from God in order to call them to God." Grundmann, "ἁμαρτάνω," *TDNT* 1:303.

to restore through his salvation. Thus, for Jesus the main preoccupation is with the annihilation of the Negative State (NS) in which humanity, by whosoever's fault, found itself lost.

The absence in the Synoptic Jesus of explicit and well-defined references to the three stages preceding the Negative State (NS), namely, 1) Human Disruption (HD), 2) State of Transgression (ST), and 3) Divine Disruption (DD), does not necessarily imply that the Synoptists rejected these concepts. As we said before, the HD, ST, and DD are present in Paul, and it is likely that the Synoptic theology kept these notions in the background but did not put any textual emphasis on them. Instead, the first three evangelists chose to stress the oppressive reality of the Negative State (NS). In fact, according to their narratives Jesus, the Divine Envoy, begins his restorative action at the NS. Thus, the apparent disparity between the Pauline perspective and that of the Synoptic Jesus might be due to a difference of emphasis.

Synoptic Images of the Negative State

According to the Synoptic writings two major thorns of the Negative State (NS) are Satan and sin. Both concepts entail other negative realities that are pernicious to humankind. In many ways Satan (Devil, Beelzebul, Demon) is connected with sin but such a relation is not necessary.⁷ Jesus' redemptive and

⁷ For example, as we will see later, Synoptic demoniacs are not seen as sinners but rather as the sick in need of healing.

salvific action comes at the time when humanity sits in darkness and the shadow of death (τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις, Lk 1:79, cf. Isa 9:2; 59:8) overpowered by the hand of the enemy, experiencing hatred, and living in the terrorizing fear of God (Lk 1:71,74). One of the major deconstructive aspects of the NS is a widespread ignorance of God, which comes from the confusing notions about his will, true worship, and the real meaning of the Scriptures. People have an intensive feeling of sinfulness and consequently see themselves as distant from God.⁸ Demons are almost freely roaming around the world inflicting pain, illness, misfortune, possessing human beings and trying to destroy their souls in eternal hell. Despite all this depressing condition people are is unable to turn to God on their own. They are enslaved in and enchained by all these negative realities. The only hope for a change lies in the direct divine intervention. The Synoptic Jesus, a Divine Agent of God, will transform this NS by redeeming, saving, and healing humanity into something totally new and good. The Messiah of God comes to eliminate all the oppressive powers and to open the doors of the Restored Positive State (RPS), or the Kingdom of Heaven⁹ to those who are willing to accept, believe, and follow him.

⁸ The Lukan account of the calling of Peter illustrates this point. Peter, seemingly an average person in regards to his religiosity, senses intense divine presence in Jesus' teaching and person. Because of his personal feeling of sinfulness he asks Jesus to depart from him ("Ἐξέλθε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἁμαρτωλός εἰμι, κύριε, Lk 5:8).

⁹ On the theological level I identify the Restored Positive State with the reality of the Kingdom of God. This identification will be discussed more extensively later on.

Satan as the Oppressive Force of the Negative State

In order to restore humanity and rescue it from its lamentable condition of the NS Jesus needs to launch an offensive against Satan.¹⁰ The NS can be equated with the rule of Satan and his kingdom. It is just the opposite to what the Positive State (PS) with the rule of God is. The Devil is the main disruptive force, the enemy (ἐχθρός, Lk 10:19) of God, who sabotages divine works (Mt 13:37-39) and torments the people (Lk 9:39; 13:16). In the understanding of the Synoptic Jesus, the power and harmful influence of the Devil should not be underestimated. Jesus himself refers to Satan as the strong one (ἰσχυρός, Mk 3:27). All the kingdoms of the world (πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης, Lk 4:5) belong to the Devil because all this domain and its glory was handed over to him (τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἅπασαν καὶ τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν, Lk 4:6).¹¹ He has a structured

¹⁰ On the history and the evolution of the Devil and demons one may consult the work of Edward Langton where the author discusses the ancient Semitic demonology, demonology of the OT, Rabbinic literature, relation of the Jewish to the Persian and Greek conceptions, Jewish apocryphal and apocalyptic writings as well as the NT perspective: Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origins and Development* (London: Epworth Press, 1949). A similar scope in the treatment of Devil and evil in Antiquity was published by Jeffrey B. Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977). A shorter study restricted to Jesus and the demons, Jewish and Greek demonology came from Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Symposium Series 12; New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984). Sydney Page offered a biblical presentation of the Devil, analyzing references to evil spirits in the OT and in Jesus' activity: Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995). Elaine Pagels focused on the social implications of the figure of Satan claiming that Christian writers used the Devil in their explanations of human conflict and to demonize their opponents: Elaine H. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995). A concise presentation of the origins of the concept of devil and demons, its phases and transformations before reaching Christianity comes in the chapter "The Devil, the Demons, and the End of the World," by Gregory J. Riley, *River of God*, 90-132.

¹¹ Later theological developments of the Gospel of John see the Devil as the ruler of this world (ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, Jn 12:31).

and organized kingdom (ὁ Σατανᾶς... ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, Mt 12:26) in which he functions as the ruler (ἄρχων) of demons (Mk 3:22). According to Matthew 10:28 it is apparently the Devil who has the power (τὸν δυνάμενον) to destroy (ἀπολέσαι) both soul and body (καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα) in hell (ἐν γέεννῃ). In the parallel version of Luke 12:5 the devil can also kill (ἀποκτείνει) and has the authority (ἐξουσία) to cast (ἐμβαλεῖν) into hell.¹² He is the one to be truly afraid of (τοῦτον φοβήθητε). He snatches from people's hearts (minds) divine words or inspirations that offer a way to salvation (Lk 8:12). He may tempt (πειράζω, Mk 1:13), or put people through a severe trial (συνιάζω), as he wanted to do with Peter, in order to dissuade them from following divine plans (Mk 1:13; Lk 22:31). He suggests ungodly ideas and even can enter (εἰσερχομαι) and use a human being for his malicious purposes (Lk 22:3, Jn 13:2). He is the one who, apparently by his own choice, departed from God and fell from heaven like lightning (Lk 10:18). Because of his evil works Satan along with his angels is destined for eternal fire (Mt 25:41). In summary, from the perspective of the Synoptic Jesus, Satan is a powerful entity who has usurped divine territory and prerogatives, corrupts divine order in the universe, and dominates the world of humankind with fear, darkness, suffering and death. People seem to be helpless against such a powerful spirit

¹² The other interpretation would see God who in his wrath and justice sends unrepentant sinners to hell. Even though this is theologically correct, the choice of the words to kill (ἀποκτείνει), and to destroy (ἀπόλλυμι) suggests that the subject of these verbs is not God but Satan. The Johannine Jesus explicitly speaks about the Devil as a murderer (ἄνθρωποκτόνος), liar and father of lies (ψεῦστος ἐστὶν καὶ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ) and has his evil desires (ἐπιθυμία) that are adopted by ungodly people (Jn 8:44).

and only an external force can liberate them from the demonic Negative State.¹³ What is at stake does not lie only in the temporal influence of the Evil One but most importantly it concerns the afterlife where Satan can destroy (ἀπόλλυμι) and throw people into eternal hell.

Sin as a Defining Feature of the Negative State

Like Satan, sin is the major affliction and a condition of the Negative State (NS). Just as Satan was the primary target for Jesus' activity so is the sin. Jesus arrives into this world to save people from sin (Mt 1:21). Addressing the sinners and calling them to repentance (μετάνοια, Lk 5:32) is for Jesus comparable to the activity of a physician (Mk 2:17). By forgiving human sins (Mk 2:5; Lk 7:48) Jesus alleviates their conscience and restores their ability to approach God without fear. The feeling of being sinful and the common

¹³ James Kallas understands the defeat of Satan as *the* reason for Jesus' miraculous activity: "New Testament miracles are based upon dualism. New Testament miracles are not an altered form of God's always present control. They are instead reestablishment of the control of God in an area where that control of God earlier had ceased to be present." Kallas, *Jesus and the Power of Satan* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 155. Regardless of the modern perceptions of the figure of Satan, Kallas' remarks are in line with the Synoptic and the entire NT understanding of cosmic powers and reality. If Satan, his kingdom, and demonic activity were eliminated from the NT thought then there would be neither NT nor a justification for the arrival of the Messiah, and his salvation. Probably as Christianity could not exist without Jesus so the theology of the NT writings would be meaningless without the figure of Satan. Kallas' conservative perspective on miracles representing "a titanic struggle with Satan" (p. 161) corresponds with the character of the Negative State (NS) indicating a transitional moment from the influence of the Disruptive force to the influence of the Restorative force. Jesus' restorative activity concentrates on the present stage of the NS. The transition from spiritual sickness to health is not a peaceful process. It involves struggle and violence (cf. crucifixion). In his interpretation of the NT confrontation between Satan and Jesus, which conceptually corresponds to my designation of NS, Gregory Riley uses a language of battle: "God sent an invasion headed by Jesus as champion of the kingdom of God," and: "As Captain of the invading kingdom of God, Jesus had come to 'enter a strong man's house and plunder his property.'" Riley, *River of God*, 108, 119.

understanding that God doesn't listen to sinners illustrate the spiritual impasse of the NS. Even though the Synoptics are not explicit on the matter of God not listening to sinners, such might have been a popular understanding. The later Gospel of John supports this view where, according to Jesus' adversaries, God does not hear sinners (οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἀκούει, Jn 9:31). Also, the veracity of Jesus' healing is questioned on the assumption that he is a sinner (Jn 9:16, 25). The Synoptic Jesus, along with his generous forgiving of sins for repentant individuals, seems to promote the opposite view, or at least to clarify the issue. In his parable about a Pharisee and a tax-collector praying in the Temple Jesus implies that God does listen to sinners as long as they assume a humble and repentant attitude (18:9-14). Nevertheless the power of sin is so great that it can be taken away only by the sacrifice and pouring of the blood of Jesus, the Divine Envoy (τὸ αἷμά μου... εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, Mt 26:28).¹⁴ This means that Jesus is not relativizing the disruptive and obstructive force of sin for the human relationship with God through his frequent acts of forgiveness. Just the opposite, for the Synoptics and their Jesus the devastating effects of sin are enormous and only a radical intrusion of the divine action can change such a murky condition of the NS.

The consequence of a widespread and un-remedied presence of sin as well as the awareness of sinfulness works as a self-defeating force for human

¹⁴ The victimizing and abusive force of sin is also present in Paul's thought. Rudolf Bultmann writes in this regard: "The power of sin operates not only in the fact that it completely dominates the man who has become its victim, but also in the fact that it forces all men without exception into slavery: 'for all have sinned' (Rom 3:23; cf. 3:9, 19)," Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Complete in One Volume; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951-1955), 249.

attempts to reach and connect with the divine. That is the characteristic of the NS as depicted by the earliest Gospels. Sin as the omnipresent factor of the NS creates an unbridgeable gap between people and God. This explains spiritual insecurity (fear, Lk 1:74), misinterpretation of the Law, misunderstanding of the sense of Scriptures and the overall Synoptic impression that people living in the NS thought they were, or perhaps were actually, distant from God. Like the dominance of the Evil One also the enslaving power of sin is too great for people to set themselves free. Only the Divine Son of God is capable to heal this situation. The Gospels are very clear and emphatic on the impossibility of self-salvation from the NS. When asked “who can be saved” (τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; Mk 10:26) Jesus explains “with people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God,” (παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον, ἀλλ’ οὐ παρὰ θεῷ· πάντα γὰρ δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, Mk 10:27). Consequently, a constant component of the Synoptic understanding of the NS is human helplessness in any attempt to overcome it. This situation of human powerlessness in regards to Satan and sin might shed some light on the concept of Divine Disruption.

Divine Disruption in Relation to the Negative State

The concept of Divine Disruption (DD) belongs to the form critical pattern of the verb *rapha*. As stated before, the idea of DD is not very clear in the Synoptic material. Because of the introduction of a new element, namely, Satan I proposed to merge separate phases of *rapha* sequence, that Human Disruption

(HD), State of Transgression (ST), Divine Disruption (DD) and Negative State (NS) into one state clearly attested by the earliest Gospels, that is the Negative State (NS) in which humanity finds itself at the arrival of the Messiah. We have seen that in Synoptics the major responsibility for the Disruption of the OPS falls upon Satan. Both, his influence and the power of sin might be seen as consequence and results of the disruption of the OPS. Perhaps this represents the DD itself. It is in the Synoptics where the Devil boasts of being in charge of all the kingdoms of the world (πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης, Lk 4:5), or having authority (ἐξουσία, Lk 4:6) something that was given to him (ὅτι ἐμοὶ παραδέδοται, Lk 4:6) presumably by God. In this sense Satan would be originally playing a role or functioning as the executioner of DD on behalf of God. People would be paying for their disobedience (not explicit in the Synoptics) by being now subdued by the Devil to whom they gave a hearing instead of listening to God. In other words DD consists in living under the dominion of the one whom they have chosen to follow through their disobedience, or original sin. As in Paul, also from this perspective the disobedience would indicate Adam's transgression in the garden of Eden (Gen 3). Ironically, the greatest punishment for humankind would be here living with the choice they made, namely Satan. In this way, DD might consist simply in the divine permission given to Satan to rule over the world and humans so that they might realize the bad choice of their original transgression. Since the Devil brings evil, painful and disruptive experience, his influence becomes as horrible as personal disease or national disaster experienced by transgressors of the OT. Just as the illness, exile, famine, and

other expressions of DD were intended to push people to repentance in the *rapha* contexts, so also the negative influence of Satan drives people to the eager expectation of a divine remedy. This means that Satan would be playing an instrumental punishing role in DD for the Synoptists. That the Devil was given certain independence by God we know also from the passages informing us that he demanded (presumably from God) to sift Peter like wheat (Lk 22:31), something that he did to Job in the OT (Job 1-2). In any case, the dominion of Satan over the world and human powerlessness to escape from it would constitute a sufficient expression of DD. At least it would accomplish what the DD was supposed to accomplish in the *rapha* theological contexts.

The above hypothesis implies some kind of deal between God and Satan, not an unusual thing if one considers the Book of Job. Yet, at the same time the Synoptics and the entire NT draw an extreme hostility between God and Devil. In line with what was said above, if one assumes that Satan was given power over the world and people as the means of punishment and the expression of DD, we might think that at a certain point he abused his God-given authority. In Jesus' parable about an unfaithful servant, he depicts a man who was put in charge of the household of his master (Mt 24:45-51). After a while the wicked servant (ὁ κακὸς δοῦλος, Mt 24:48) started abusing the household and beating other servants. For this he will be severely punished by being put in the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, that is, hell. Whether the Synoptics held such a perspective on the role of the Devil and his abusive power remains speculative. Yet, the analogy between the two situations cannot be

dismissed. Consequently, it is possible that the Synoptic Jesus perceived the reality of DD and NS as the same sad situation of humankind without differentiating them. This is the situation that can be healed by a faithful Servant of God, Jesus the Messiah who instead of abusing God's household comes with love, compassion and readiness to offer his own life to save those in need of help.¹⁵

The state of Divine Disruption in the OT is a punitive phase but in the Synoptic Jesus this retaliatory aspect is not present. In lieu of punishment he comes with mercy, compassion, love, and forgiveness. This is not totally absent in the OT since there are some *rapha* passages where Yahweh suffers because of the castigation he needs to inflict on his people. It is Yahweh himself who wishes and calls for human conversion through his emissaries. In an analogous manner, Jesus might be monopolizing the same thought which in the context of all the *rapha* passages is rather marginal since for most *rapha* contexts punishment is quite typical. So, it appears that the Jesus of the Gospels, and perhaps even the historical one, has promoted this atypical and avant-garde theological vision of the OT. It was "atypical" not in the sense of contradictory to the OT theology but rather as unconventional for the restorative action of *rapha*. Typically and conventionally the form critical sequence of *rapha* would include the arrival of Divine Disruption as a punishment. Having said this, we keep in

¹⁵ There are several instances where the NT draws a contrast between Jesus and the unfaithful individuals who might be identified with Satan. For example the hired hand (ὁ μισθωτὸς) doesn't care about the sheep (Jn 10:12), he is a thief who came to steal and slaughter (ὁ κλέπτης οὐκ ἔρχεται εἰ μὴ ἵνα κλέψῃ καὶ θύσῃ καὶ ἀπολέσῃ, Jn 10:10) while Jesus is the good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11)

mind that the idea of punishment is not absent in Jesus' teaching. It comes, however, at a different point and it is reserved for those who reject his call to repentance. In regards to the present activity of the Divine Agent it is not punitive or disruptive of the human State of Transgression (ST). While the Agent's activity is disruptive for the Devil it remains medicinal for the humans.

Chapter 2

Restoration Patterns in Jesus' Activity

Spiritual restoration of humankind comes forward as the primary goal of Christ's mission into the world. As the faithful Agent of God, Jesus uses all his powers, instructions, energy, and even his own life for the purpose of transferring humanity from the NS to the RPS. His restoration means above all a spiritual healing but it reflects also on the physical area of human suffering and diseases. While Jesus' teaching, or Gospel, relates almost exclusively to the matters of spiritual and theological healing, his thaumaturgical actions of cures and exorcisms might be taken as illustrations of the meaning of spiritual restoration. In the upcoming sections we will analyze the theological implications of Jesus' healing actions on both the physical and the spiritual level.

Non-Theological Layer in Jesus' Restorative Miracles

Some of Jesus' restorative miracles have no direct theological relevance for the person being healed. At most they may illustrate Jesus' compassion, his healing power, or just serve as a sign¹ and confirmation of his divine agency.

¹ The understanding of miracle as a sign is typical for the later theological perspectives of the Gospel of John. Here, Jesus performs signs (τὰ σημεία) as opposite to miracles (δυνάμεις) in the Synoptic Gospels. The purpose of his signs is to awaken faith in a person (ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ ἐφάνέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, Jn 2:11, and πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ θεωροῦντες αὐτοῦ τὰ σημεία ἃ ἐποίει, Jn 2:23). On account of signs performed on the sick many people believe and follow Jesus (ἠκολούθει δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολὺς, ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεία ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων, Jn 6:2). Jesus himself is aware that without signs people will not believe in him or his message

These aspects however relate more to Jesus and his mission than to a person benefiting from a miracle. Thus when I say that these healings have a non-theological character this is in regards to the object of healing and not to the background of the Gospel's presentation of Jesus, or in regards to a specific function that a miracle may play in the larger context of the narrative, or other allegorical implications as advanced by some Church Fathers. For the sake of clarity I will refer to this portion of theological irrelevance in healings and exorcisms as a *non-theological layer* of restorative miracles. This non-theological layer of Jesus' healings resembles restorations seen in the secular usage of the verb *rapha*. In those cases we had five form critical phases related to the action of *rapha*. There was an Original Positive State (OPS) indicating the situation of wholeness and proper functionality; Disruption that caused the cessation of the OPS; Negative State (NS) of brokenness, sickness, or dysfunction; Restoration meaning the action of healing, reparation, revitalization, and return to proper being or functionality; and finally the Restored Positive State (RPS) which is the end result of the restorative action of *rapha*. These were secular or non-theological employments of *rapha* where neither God, nor moral or religious aspects were a part of the process of restoration. In the OT, secular usage of *rapha* was mostly confined to the restoration of objects and physical healings of human bodies that might be seen as natural healings (Lev 13:18; 14:48; 1 Kgs 18:30; 2 Kgs 8:29, etc).

(ἐὰν μὴ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἴδῃτε, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε, Jn 4:48). Nevertheless, in spite of his signs some people rejected to respond with the attitude of faith (τοσαῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ σημεῖα πεποιηκότος ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν, Jn 12:37).

Among Jesus' healings that have no direct theological implication for the healed person we can classify the following: The healing of Simon's mother-in-law (Mk 1:29-31), the healing of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:21-24, 35-43), the healing of the sick in Gennesaret (Mk 6:53-56), the healing of the death and dumb man (Mk 7:31-37), the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (Mt 8:22-26), the healing of a centurion's servant (Mt 8:5-13), the healing of two blind men (Mt 9:27-31), the healing of the blind and lame in the Temple (Mt 21:14), the resuscitation of the widow's son at Nain (Lk 7:11-17), the healing of the man with dropsy (Lk 14:1-6), and the healing of Malchus' ear (Lk 22:50-51). Regardless of their contextual evaluation within larger portions of a narrative or even within the entire Gospel the above healings have essentially no theological meaning for the person healed. This is the non-theological layer of these restorative miracles. They did not produce any internal transformation that would be attested by the evangelist. There was no expectation for the sick individuals to repent from committed sins, undertake a firm resolution of amending their lives, praying to God for a miraculous healing, expressions of loyalty to Jesus or the intention to follow him. On the basis of these narratives the moment of healing could be the first and the last time the restored individuals ever came in personal contact with Jesus. The reader of these stories cannot infer whether these beneficiaries of Jesus' healings were devoted observers of religious traditions and prescriptions or just so-called "sinners." We do not know from the narratives whether Jesus' healing of their illnesses had any (lasting) spiritual impact.

For many of these healed, faith was an important element in obtaining the miraculous healing. It was not a faith in Jesus as the Son of God or Messiah but the conviction that he was a mighty wonder-worker who certainly would be able to heal them. Thus, it was not a faith in the divine identity of Jesus but in his ability to perform a miracle. From this we may conclude that the above Synoptic healings are not intended to illustrate how Jesus' restoration of the functionality of human bodies relates to the spiritual dimension of the healed person. Instead, these accounts serve other purposes. They exemplify Jesus' compassion, give an occasion to issue a teaching (cf. healings on Sabbath), and demonstrate to the reader the thaumaturgical powers of the Agent of God. In a rudimentary form they point to faith as an important element during the encounter with Jesus. For the healed ones it is just a belief in Jesus' miraculous abilities; for the readers on the other hand, it evokes a faith of a different character, the faith that Jesus is the Christ of God.

A similar non-theological layer appears in some exorcisms.² As in the healings of physical ailments, the narratives of these exorcisms do not show any internal spiritual or transforming impact on the person freed from the unclean

² Vast literature has been dedicated to the subject of NT exorcism. More than half a century ago S. Vernon McCasland attempted to analyze Jesus' expulsions of demons from the "modern" views of mental disorders: Selby Vernon McCasland, *By the Finger of God: Demon Possession and Exorcism in the Light of Modern Views of Mental Illness* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1951). A significant study of NT exorcism comes from Graham Twelftree where the author proposes to examine Jesus' "reported" ministry of exorcism from a historical perspective (p. 9): Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.54. Tübingen: Mohr, 1993). In the revision of his doctoral dissertation Eric Sorensen engaged in the study of demonic possession and exorcism in Mesopotamia, Zoroastrian traditions, ancient Israel and early Judaism, Greece, NT and early Christianity. Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 157; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

sprit. For example, the exorcism of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter (Mk 9:24-30), the exorcism of the epileptic boy (Mk 9:14-29), the exorcism of the deaf demoniac (Mt 9:32-34), the exorcism of a blind and deaf demoniac (Mt 12:22). In these narratives the beneficiaries of Jesus' exorcisms are almost ignored while the emphasis is placed on the meaning of the act, the legitimacy of Jesus' exorcisms, the importance of faith, the performance of miracles for Gentiles, etc. In regards to those who were freed from demons the results are briefly stated, such as: "she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone," (Mk 7:30), "Jesus took him [the boy] by the hand and lifted him up and he arose," (Mk 9:27), "when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke" (Mt 9:33), "a blind and dumb demoniac was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw," (Mt 12:22). These exorcisms play an important role in the overall narrative of the Gospels but have no theological significance for the recipients of the restorative action of the Agent. The non-theological layer shows that some of the healed benefited from Jesus' miracles on a physical level only. For others a physical restoration from sicknesses and demons produced strong internal spiritual repercussions.

The non-theological layer in Jesus' restorative miracles corresponds with form critical stages of the secular (non-theological) employment of *rapha* (discussed in "Theological Usage of *rapha*" and illustrated by Figure 1). Below is a graphic illustrating this non-theological layer in the restorative miracles of the Synoptic Jesus.

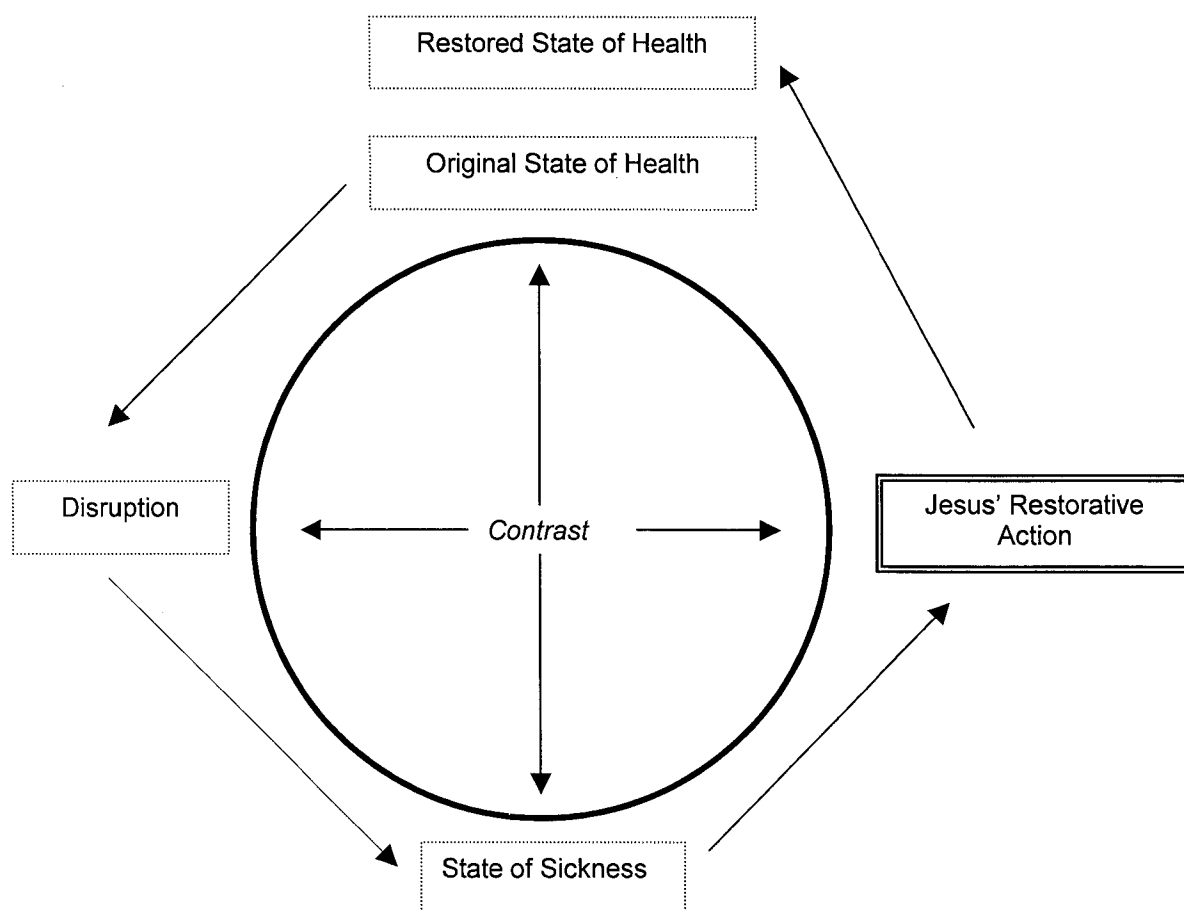


Figure 3. Stages in the non-theological layer of Jesus' restorative miracles.

The two graphics (Fig. 1 and Fig. 3) demonstrate that the restorative pattern is exactly the same. Both illustrations exemplify a sequential transition from the state of wholeness and health (OPS, Original State of Health) through Disruption toward the Negative State or the State of Sickness. The subsequent phase entails the restorative action of *rapha*, or Jesus' Restorative Action resulting in the RPS or Restored State of Health.

Spiritual Restorations of Individual Persons

Some physical healings and most of Jesus' exorcisms produce a noticeable spiritual impact on the beneficiaries of the restorations. In these cases there are direct theological references made before, during, or after Jesus' restorative action occurred. They may come either from Jesus himself or from the healed, observations of the crowd, or direct comment of the evangelist. Among major theological themes connected with Jesus' restorative actions of healings and exorcisms are: faith, sin, salvation, subjugation of the devil, as well as the origin of Jesus' thaumaturgical power. At the level of the Synoptic narrative these theological themes are still, intentionally, inhibited especially when compared to the theological reflections of Paul or Johannine literature. The three evangelists expose these important topics in such a way that the reader needs to make his or her own "discoveries" of a deeper meaning of Jesus' words, deeds, surrounding circumstances, comments, etc. The central idea is to enable the reader to make a transition from the literal account of the material, presumably historical, occurrences to higher levels of spiritual and theological meaning of these events.

Faith and Salvation in Jesus' Restorations

One of the most illustrative physical healings with spiritual and theological implications comes with the story about the restoration of a woman suffering from chronic hemorrhage (Mk 5:21-34). The emphasis on faith and believing (πίστις,

πιστεύω) comes at the very beginning of the narrative. The sick woman expresses her conviction “If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well (σωθήσομαι, Mk 5:28).” After she accomplished what she hoped she was immediately healed and dismissed with Jesus’ reassuring words “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction,” (Θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· ὕπαγε εἰς εἰρήνην καὶ ἴσθι ὑγιὴς ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγός σου, Mk 5:34). The account twice underscores the crucial importance of faith.³ First it is the woman’s firm conviction of healing powers residing in Jesus. Second, the confirming words of the healer that the woman’s faith indeed was essential for this miracle. Thus, a simple, non-theological conviction rises to the level of a faith powerful enough to trigger a miraculous restoration of health. Such a perspective is common to many other narratives of Jesus’ mighty deeds. Bartimaeus of Jericho also manifested a strong conviction in Jesus’ healing abilities by persistently screaming, despite the rebukes of the crowd, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mk 10:47). When Bartimaeus’ sight was healed Jesus affirmed: “your faith has saved you,” (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε, Mk 10:52). A Samaritan leper whom Jesus cleansed from the disease received the same comment from the Healer: “your faith has saved you,” (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε, Lk 17:19). The use of the verb *save* (σώζω) in connection with a personal belief

³ Maureen Yeung in a revised version of her doctoral thesis has conducted extensive research in Hellenistic and Jewish literature to find a background for Jesus’ expression “your faith has saved you.” In a subsequent phase she postulated Paul’s development of Jesus’ Miracle-Salvation Faith. Yeung, *Faith in Jesus and Paul: A Comparison with Special Reference to “Faith that Can Remove Mountains” and “Your Faith Has Healed/Saved you”* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 147; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

(πίστις) that Jesus is able to produce a mighty deed has a double dimension. From the point of physical healing it was just a powerful conviction in the Healer's ability to effectuate a miracle. Theologically, the Evangelists emphasized the spiritual meaning of the mighty deed, namely, the faith in Jesus' ability to save from the Negative State (NS) and all its pernicious accompaniments. In this context the healing miracle is only an occasion to issue a theological statement. It points to a higher aspect, or the real meaning of Jesus' healing, that is, the eternal salvation of a human being.

There are other instances where the faith or believing (πίστις, πιστεύω) is related to Jesus' mighty deeds although the expression "your faith has saved you" is absent. Before the healing of two blind men Jesus asks them "do you believe I can do it?" (Πιστεύετε ὅτι δύναμαι τοῦτο ποιῆσαι; Mt 9:28). Their affirmative answer prompted the miraculous healing with Jesus words: "May it be done to you according to your faith," (Κατὰ τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν γενηθήτω ὑμῖν, Mt 9:29). A similar answer comes from the centurion who requested Jesus' healing for one of his servants. First Jesus praises the Gentile official for his faith "Not even in Israel have I found such faith," (Mt 8:10) and then says "may it be done for you as you have believed (ὥς ἐπίστευσας γενηθήτω σοι, Mt 8:13). Also the Syrophoenician woman asking for the exorcism on behalf of her daughter hears the words of praise for her faith "Great is your faith! Be it done for you as you want," (μεγάλη σου ἡ πίστις· γενηθήτω σοι ὡς θέλεις, Mt 15:28). In Mark's story about a paralytic brought to Jesus by four men, it was their faith that impressed Jesus to the point of forgiving the paralytic's sins and restoring his body to proper

functionality (καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν, Mk 2:5). Through these healing examples the evangelists suggest that the action of healing is conditioned by the faith of the recipient or the one who requests it on behalf of someone else. This is on the level of physical healings. Yet, the real point of the Synoptists is to have their readers transfer this principle to spiritual healing that is the salvation of the soul.

In the above narratives the physical healing appears as a free and readily available gift for those who manage to reach Jesus either personally or through a mediator. This gift may be obtained in the context of faith in Jesus' ability to either actively perform a miracle or passively emanate his healing power. This situation resembles healing instances related to the noun *marpe* in Proverbs, that is, *marpe*^w. In those cases reaching, securing, or obtaining *health* was related to a personal choice. As we remember, God was not directly involved in granting or withholding healing. It was a human being who had an option to choose good or evil, sickness or health, curse or blessings. A person could elect one of the Two Ways. Even though God was not directly involved in granting healing or punishing with sickness, still his presence and the role of remote Endorser of universal laws was strongly implied. In Jesus' healings the presence of the divine is also attested. But, as in the OT *marpe*^w healings, here also personal choice, through one's faith, will determine the outcome: restoration to health or continuance of sickness, salvation or condemnation.

The importance of faith is not confined to healings and exorcism in the Synoptic narratives. Faith plays a key role also in other mighty deeds of the

Divine Agent. In response to their desperate cry “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing,” (Διδάσκαλε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἀπολλύμεθα; Mk 4:38), Jesus rebukes and calms the storm. Then he reproves his apostles saying: “Why are you afraid? Where is your faith?” (Τί δειλοί ἐστε; οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν; Mk 4:40). In this verse the lack of faith is related to perishing (ἀπόλλυμι).⁴ The contrast between the two attitudes is obvious: faith produces salvation, lack of faith leads to destruction. This becomes even more emphatic when the reader steps up to the theological meaning of the words. The action of *perishing* (ἀπόλλυμι) is rendered by the same verb that is applied to those who are lost “For the Son of Man has come (ἦλθεν) to seek and to save (σώζω) that which was lost (τὸ ἀπολωλός),” (Lk 19:10). In other verses the passive voice of the verb ἀπόλλυμι describes the action of being destroyed in hell (Mt 10:28; Lk 13:5, Jn 3:16).

Jesus reproaches unbelief (ἀπιστία), even on the level of physical healings and other miracles, as a negative attitude that might have eternal consequences. When Peter falters during his walking on the water *toward* Jesus and calls “Lord, save me,” (Κύριε, σῶσόν με, Mt 14:30), the Master rebukes his disciple saying “You of little faith (ὀλιγόπιστε), why did you doubt?” Similarly, Jesus condemns the internal disposition of faithlessness in the episode of the exorcism of an epileptic boy in the Matthean version when he scolds the crowd calling them

⁴ On the basis of its usage in the classical and biblical Greek Albrecht Oepke assigns to the verb ἀπόλλυμι four literal meanings: a) “to destroy or kill,” b) “to lose or suffer loss from,” c) “to perish,” d) “to be lost.” Regarding the figurative employment of ἀπόλλυμι in the NT Oepke writes: “It is impossible to trace back the figurative use to any one of the meanings listed. In general we may say that b. and d. underlie statements relating to this world as in the Synoptists, whereas a. and c. underlie those relating to the next world, as in Paul and John.” Oepke, “ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπώλεια, ἀπολλύων,” *TDNT* 1:394.

“faithless and perverse generation” (ἡ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη, Mt 17:17) and tells the disciples that they had no power over the devil because of their little faith (ὀλιγοπιστία, Mt 17:20).

The attitude of faith or unbelief on the part of human recipients determines the Agent’s ability to effectively perform his divinely assigned mission. The lack of faith makes a human being resistant and incapable of benefiting from the divine gift of restoration. During the visit to his hometown Jesus encountered such a strong disbelief that he was unable to perform healings and other mighty works (Mt 13:53-58; Mk 6:1-6; Lk 4:16-30). According to Mark, Jesus “marveled because of their unbelief (ἄπιστία),” (Mk 6:6). Consequently he could not perform miracles in that place (οὐκ ἐδύνατο ἐκεῖ ποιῆσαι οὐδεμίαν δύναμιν, Mk 6:5), except for a few healings (εἰ μὴ ὀλίγοις ἁρρώστοις ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας ἐθεράπευσεν, Mk 6:5).

In summary Jesus’ physical healings as well as other miracles underscore the importance of faith for salvation. On the literary level of the narrative faith means a firm conviction that through Jesus a healing or another powerful deed will be accomplished. Salvation indicates either the healing of the physical body, liberation from the demonic oppression or possession, or rescuing from danger. On the spiritual or theological level the healing episodes illustrate the process of, and requirements for, restoration from the Negative State into the Positive State, that is eternal life also called the Kingdom of God.⁵ Below is a linear illustration of the relation between faith and healing, unbelief and sickness.

⁵ In his *ABD* entry “Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven,” Dennis Duling reviews recent interpretations of the concept of “kingdom of God” in Jesus’ teaching and understanding. Accordingly there have been six major scholarly perspectives: 1) The Political Kingdom. There

Faith (πίστις, πιστεύω) → **produces** → **Healing/Salvation** (σώζω)

Unbelief (ἀπιστία) → **produces/continues** → **Illness/Destruction** (ἀπόλλυμι)

are two approaches within this perspective. First, positioning Jesus within the political movements of 1st century Palestine. Second, analyzing his teaching alongside analogous Kingdom sayings found in the Aramaic Targums politically interpreted. The combination of these two approaches led to an extreme position where “The Kingdom of Heaven was a code word for God’s *political* restoration of the Davidic kingdom with Jesus as king and his followers as his chief counselors.” 2) The Kingdom and the Present Ethical Action. This approach has drawn on the rabbinic literature and the “present-oriented” sayings of Jesus giving rise to the notion of “realized eschatology.” Duling explains “This position claims that Jesus’ present sayings (e.g., *ephthasen*, ‘has come,’ Luke 11:20) are determinative for his future sayings (e.g., *engiken*, ‘at hand,’ Mark 1:15)... The parables of the Kingdom demonstrate its presence; ethics provide a ‘moral ideal’ for those who have already accepted it. Thus, the emphasis lies on the Kingdom ‘in the midst of you’ (Luke 17:21) or that ‘has come upon you’ (Luke 11:20). 3) The Future Apocalyptic Kingdom. In this context the stress comes on the Jewish apocalyptic eschatology as being illuminative for the notion of the Synoptic Kingdom. In this way “God, not revolutionary human beings, will act to redeem his people in the *future* by judging worldly kingdoms, destroying his people’s Satanic enemies, and reversing the present order of the world.” 4) The Modified Apocalyptic Kingdom. According to this “reduced apocalyptic” position “Jesus rejected the usual cosmic signs by stressing the imminence of the Kingdom, and by seeing his own prophetic, but non-Messianic, activity as the sign of its dawning, though not yet present, character – an ‘already, not yet’ emphasis... There is a dialectic between present and future; one is in the crisis of decision in such a way that chronological time is collapsed into each new existential moment of decision, the ‘NOW.’ 5) The Atemporal Kingdom. This position proposes to take the notion of Kingdom as a “sign” or “symbol” where the most important sayings are those with the “present” character of the Kingdom (Lk 11:20; 17:20-21; Mt 11:12). Within this category interpreting the phrase “Kingdom of God” as a symbol “one view attempts to correlate atemporal ‘structuralist’ readings of certain parables with ‘present’ Kingdom sayings to arrive at a preconceptual, intuitive insight into the Kingdom symbol as that which shatters one’s familiar world and creates anew world; this, it is say, was Jesus’ experience of God.” 6) The Kingdom, Wisdom, and Gnosticism. There is an analogy between the modern literary atemporal interpretation of the Kingdom and the internalized Kingdom of the *Gospel of Thomas* that has no references to the apocalyptic Son of Man theme or apocalyptic kingdom sayings. Also there is a wisdom approach to the Kingdom seeing the historical Jesus as a teacher combining the Cynic “metic” wisdom and Hebrew wisdom. In this regard Duling thinks “If correct, the conventional view of Jesus as the prophet of the apocalyptic Kingdom was a later, imaginative creation of early Christian communities whose group formation involved opposition from and toward outsiders, that is, the synagogue... This perspective about Jesus is said to cohere with his three major ‘present’ Kingdom sayings (Luke 11:20; 17:20; Matt 11:12).” In his conclusive remarks Duling summarizes: “The radical political perspective on Jesus’ Kingdom teaching is still current, but it remains a minority position... The more extreme apocalyptic position on Jesus’ *life* as a basis for his Kingdom *teaching* has persisted as a minority position... The ‘ethical’ interpretations of the Kingdom still persist... Finally, the atemporal literary approaches now abound, especially in North America.” Duling, “Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven,” *ABD* 4:62-65.

Jesus' Restorations in Relation to Sin

We have already discussed sin as the major characteristic of the Negative State (NS). Now, we are going to look at sin in relation to sickness and Jesus' healings.⁶ From the analysis of *rapha* pericopes in the Hebrew Bible we have identified a strong correlation between sin and sickness as well as the relation between repentance and healing. Job's misfortunes, including physical illness, were attributed to his sin. This was a traditional understanding of sin and sickness as a cause/effect relationship, a view represented by Job's friends. The Book of Job however questions the validity of such a theological perspective. We need to notice that it is in the context of uneasiness with traditional OT views linking sin with sickness that the Book of Job introduces the figure of Satan as contributive or responsible for human suffering and illness. In line with Job 1-2, the Synoptic Jesus seems to approach the question of sin and sickness from the assumption that Satan is responsible for the human disaster of living in the NS, a state of misery and sickness.

In chapter 38, the deuterio-canonical Book of Sirach, ca. 200-175 B.C, assumes a middle position in regards to illness and sin. The sin is not deemed to be the cause of sickness; however, in order to be healed one should flee from evil actions: "My son, when you are ill (ἀρρώστημα), delay not, but pray (εὐχομαι) to

⁶ According to John C. Thomas the NT identifies three causes of illness or death: God (correction or punishment), Devil/demons, and natural causes. But the attribution of infirmity to Devil/demons is confined to the Synoptic Gospels only. Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 13; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 297-305.

the Lord, who will heal you (ἰάομαι). Flee offenses (πλημμέλεια); let your hands be just, cleanse your heart of every sin (ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας καθάρισον καρδίαν), (Sir 38:9-10). These remedial actions are recommended along with the assistance of a physician (ἰατρός). According to Sirach, God established physicians as health professionals who should be held in esteem (Sir 38:1). Physicians may legitimately use various remedies encountered in nature (ἐκ γῆς φάρμακα, Sir 38:4) in order to cure diseases. In this way Sirach 38 displays two layers in the healing process. There is a physical part, that is, bodily illness, physician, and remedies of the earth, and there is also a spiritual part. The spiritual aspect of effective healing has to do with internal purification, distancing oneself from transgressions (πλημμέλεια), undertaking a morally correct life-style, and cleansing oneself from sin. It still remains unknown whether sin has anything to do with physical infirmity. Yet, at the same time, repenting from, cleansing oneself of, and distancing oneself from sin forms a part of effective healing. The above motifs are present in the healings of Jesus, the divine *iatros*. Whether Jesus' use of saliva and mud in his healings should be understood as the application of earthly remedies or a magical gesture is not important for our discussion at this point (Mk 7:33; Jn 9:6).⁷ What is important, however, is the

⁷ The accusation that Jesus performed his restorative miracles by magical powers emerged early in the history of Christianity. The major factor for such an allegation comes probably from the fact that the Greco-Roman world contemporary to the historical Jesus and to early Christianity was replete with the practice of magic. Several studies have been dedicated to this subject. For example: John Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (Studies in Biblical Theology. Second Series 28; London: SCM Press, 1974); and Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978). More recently two other works were dedicated to the subject of magic in the Jewish and the Greco-Roman world before, during and after the rise of Christianity: Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*

relation between sin, sickness and restoration to health. The healing of a paralytic offers some material for the reflection on this subject (Mk 2:1-12).

The healing of the paralytic comes in the context of the forgiveness of sins “my son, your sins are forgiven,” (Mk 2:5). Yet, the original intention of bringing the paralytic to Jesus had nothing to do with sins and their forgiveness. Instead, the four men brought their friend to the Master trusting that a physical healing would occur. It was *their* faith (τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν, Mk 2:5) that inspired Jesus to perform a full healing, namely, of the body and of the soul of the paralytic. The speculation that paralysis came upon the man as punishment for his sins has no textual support in this case.⁸ Jesus’ action of first performing spiritual cleaning and then restoring physical body corresponds to the guidelines of Sirach 38. He is a divinely sanctioned *iatros* competent in both physical and spiritual restorations. Yet, throughout the narrative the evangelist clearly gives prominence to the act of forgiving sins, that is spiritual healing, over the mere

(Religion in the First Christian Centuries; London: Routledge, 2001); and Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁸ The Johannine Jesus, however, makes such a connection between sickness and sin. After healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, who had been sick for thirty-eight years, Jesus gave him a stern warning “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore (μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε), so that nothing worse happens to you” (Jn 5:14). This is a clear example where physical illness is understood as a punishment for sins. One needs to remember that from the chronological perspective this theological assertion comes almost at the conclusion of the NT collection, around 90 C.E. As such it neither corroborates Synoptic perspective nor should be positioned against it. The other instance in the same Gospel of John offers a contrasting view whether Jesus explicitly affirms that nobody’s sin is responsible for the disability of a man born blind (Jn 9:2-3). The Synoptic Jesus seems to correct popular belief that personal sin is the direct cause of illness and suffering. In Luke 13:1-3 Jesus asserts that the Galilean victims of Pilate’s rage were no greater sinners than other Galileans. In other words their death could not be attributed to their sins. The tragic death of eighteen men on whom the tower of Siloam fell should not be related to their sinfulness either, according to the Synoptic Jesus (Lk 13:4-5). But from there Jesus proceeds to say to his audience that if they don’t repent (ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήτε), they will all perish (ἀπόλλυμι), (Lk 13:3, 5).

restoration of physical faculties. The ensuing debate over the forgiveness of sins (Mk 2:6-12) confirms it. That Jesus' healing activity is primarily aimed at spiritual sickness, that is sin, emerges clearly and forcefully from his statement that it is the sick who have need of a physician and that he came to call the sinners, that is, the sick (Mk 2:17). On the basis of the above we can affirm that the forgiveness of sins is equated with healing in the ministry of the Synoptic Jesus. There is still another interesting example that corroborates this assertion.

We have seen that in a few healings narratives after restoration has taken place Jesus issued a statement, "your faith has saved you." Luke uses this expression after the healing of the hemorrhaging woman "your faith has saved you, go in peace" (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην, Lk 8:48). That is known also from the parallel texts of Mark and Matthew (Mk 5:34; Mt 9:22). The identical expression comes from Jesus' mouth in another context of Luke's Gospel (Lk 7:36-50). When Jesus came to the house of Simon, the Pharisee, a sinful woman approached him. She was sorry for her sins, wept, anointed Jesus' feet with oil and her tears which she swept with her hair while kissing Jesus' feet. To the disconcerted witnesses Jesus spoke of many sins forgiven to those who love much. Finally, Jesus addressed the woman saying "your sins are forgiven" (Lk 7:48) and "your faith has saved you, go in peace" (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε· πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην, Lk 7:50). This is the identical reassurance that was given to the hemorrhaging woman. In her case the words "faith" and "save" were related to the physical healing of her bodily infirmity. But, in the instance of the sinful woman in Simon's house the words "faith" and "save" referred to the forgiveness

of sins. Just as Luke tends to identify healing with exorcism (Lk 8:2; 9:42) in this instance Luke equates healing with the forgiveness of sins. This close association of healing with the forgiveness of sins comes also from the Lukan version of the healing of the paralytic (Lk 5:17-26). We have already discussed that episode in the Markan text (Mk 1:40-45) where the same connection was evident. In Luke however there is also a lexical connection. Before the paralytic is brought to Jesus, the evangelist offers a general description of Jesus' healings saying: "the power of the Lord was with him to heal" (καὶ δύναμις κυρίου ἦν εἰς τὸ ἰᾶσθαι αὐτόν, Lk 5:17).⁹ Then a few verses later this power to heal translates into "your sins are forgiven you" (φέωνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου, Lk 5:20).

This section has shown the correlation between forgiveness of sins and healing. Thus the forgiveness of sins might be seen either as a part of Jesus' healing ministry or his ministry could be entirely identified with healing. Healing miracles illustrate the initial stages of the liberating action of the Divine Agent that eliminates the devastating power of sin. Yet, the full healing power manifests itself in the process of Jesus' dying and pouring out his blood for the forgiveness of the sins of many (Mt 26:28). This points to Jesus' death (salvation, redemption) as the ultimate healing of sins.

⁹ This verse suggests that the healing power of God was with Jesus whom he established as Messenger and Physician. But in Lk 6:19 as the crowds attempt to touch Jesus the healing power comes out of him without any qualification that it was the power of God. The stress is that the power was emanating from Jesus himself, and by implication that it was his own power (δύναμις παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξήρχετο καὶ ἰᾶτο πάντας, Lk 6:19).

Restorative Miracles as the Subjugation of the Devil

Restoration is an action as well as the final result of the transition process from the Negative State (NS) to the Restored Positive State (RPS). The transition means a rescuing action from the harmful influence of the NS and eventually the dismantlement and replacement of the NS with the new reality of the Kingdom, that is the RPS. As mentioned before the two major afflictions of the NS were sin and the dominion of the Devil. We spoke about sin and healing in the previous section. Since the Devil is a major component of the NS, the elimination of his power is a necessary and inherent part of the restoration. Without the elimination of the Devil and all the harmful connotations attached to this figure the transition from NS to RPS cannot take place. The transition is a process of healing and restoration and therefore if Satan retains his dominion he prolongs the existence of the NS. This would stall the restoration and exclude the healing. Synoptic narratives of Jesus' physical healings as well as other mighty deeds display how the Divine Agent truncates the authority of the evil one.

While recapitulating Christ's earthly ministry Luke says that Jesus went about doing good and healing all those who were oppressed by the Devil (ὃς διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν καὶ ἰώμενος πάντας τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου, Acts 10:18). The text doesn't specify what the Devil's oppression (καταδυναστεύω) is supposed to mean. Yet, it is very clear that those who are subjected to demonic domination (καταδυναστευομένους) were healed by Jesus. Consequently,

the demonic oppression of human beings requires *healing*.¹⁰ It is with this perspective that the Synoptic evangelists display a double relation between the Devil and human physical illness. First, the evil spirit may be responsible for affecting a person with infirmity. Second, an unclean spirit can possess a man or woman and make its residence inside of the human body, taking over the person's mental and physical faculties. Jesus deals with both cases in the course of his restorative mission and both cases are presented as healings.

In the story about the healing of a crippled woman in the synagogue (Lk 13:10-17), Luke says that she had a spirit of infirmity (πνεῦμα ἔχουσα ἀσθενείας, Lk 13:11) for eighteen years which caused her to be bent over. During the instant healing Jesus addressed the woman saying “you are loosed from your infirmity,” (ἀπολέλυσαι τῆς ἀσθενείας σου, Lk 13:12). Since the synagogue official became indignant at Jesus for healing (θεραπεύω, 13:14) on the Sabbath, the Master responded “This daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now, should she not have been released from this bondage (λυθῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ τούτου) even on the Sabbath?” (Lk 13:16). Clearly according to the narrative Jesus neither expelled Satan nor rebuked the infirmity. He simply loosed (ἀπολύω, Lk 13:12, and λύω, Lk 13:16) her from her illness (ἀσθένεια, Lk 13:12) referred to also as a bond (δεσμός, Lk 13:16). Therefore, the event may

¹⁰ The interpretation of Jesus' exorcisms as healings occurs frequently in present-day scholarship. For example Graham Twelftree defines exorcism, as understood in the first century C. E., in the following terms: “Exorcism was a form of healing used when demons or evil spirits were thought to have entered a person and to be responsible for sickness and was the attempt to control and cast out or expel evil spiritual beings or demons from people.” Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 13.

not be called an exorcism but a classical healing of physical illness. It is important to notice that Satan's bond (δεσμός) is used here as a synonym for infirmity (ἀσθένεια). In other words the view is that through the means of sickness (ἀσθένεια), the evil spirit binds (δέω, Lk 13:16) a person. This language implies a loss of freedom and consequently slavery. Through the imposition of physical illness the Devil can enslave and keep captive a human being. This entails restrictions of physical activities and overall proper functioning. This lack of proper functioning is also, as we have seen many times, the characteristic of the NS. The curing of the crippled woman illustrates very well the two dimensions of Jesus healings. Even though the infirmity is physical, its source lies in a spiritual entity. In other words, the physical illness functions only as a symptom of a spiritual disorder, not a spiritual disorder of the crippled woman, of whose personal life the narrative says nothing, but a spiritual disorder emanating from the reality of the NS. The disorder consists in the fact that Satan has authority and power over humankind. Consequently, physical illness and suffering exemplifies the nature of the NS.

Synoptic writers present possession as a peculiar kind of affliction through which a devil torments a person. Once an evil spirit enters into a human being it may try to kill the person (ἀπόλλυμι, Mk 9:22) by repeatedly driving the victim toward actions resulting in self-inflicted injuries (Mk 5:5). Using the physical body of its victim the demon may assault other people (Acts 19:15-16) with a force exceeding natural human strength (Mk 5:4). Jesus liberates demoniacs by the

authoritative expulsion of the indwelling evil spirits, that is, through exorcism.

The first three Gospels place exorcism in the category of healings.

Luke mentions in his Gospel certain women who followed Jesus while he was preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom. These women are said to have been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses (γυναῖκες τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Lk 8:2). The text uses only one verb, to cure (θεραπεύω) in references to both infirmities (ἀσθενειῶν) and evil spirits (πνευμάτων πονηρῶν) making no distinction whatsoever between the two kinds of affliction. The women, including Mary Magdalene from whom seven demons came out, needed a *healing*. A theological merger of illness, afflictions and demons emerges also from the Lukan overview of Jesus' activities upon the arrival of the delegation from John the Baptist (Lk 7:18-23). The text says "He cured (θεραπεύω) many diseases (νόσος), afflictions (μάστιξ), and evil spirits (πνευμάτων πονηρῶν); and to many blind He gave sight," (Lk 7:21).

A similar identification between demonic possession and healing comes from the narrative about the restoration of a boy tormented by a demon (Lk 9:37-43). After reprimanding the crowd for their lack of faith (ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη, Lk 9:41) Jesus "rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and returned him to his father," (ἐπετίμησεν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ καὶ ἰάσατο τὸν παῖδα καὶ ἀπέδωκεν αὐτὸν τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, Lk 9:42). Thus, the liberation from the unclean spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον) is understood as healing (ἰάομαι). This is confirmed also in the Matthean version which uses a different healing verb but retains the same relation between the expulsion of the demon and

physical/mental restoration: “Jesus rebuked (ἐπιτιμάω) the demon, and it came out (ἐξέρχομαι) of him, and the child was cured (θεραπεύω),” (Mt 17:18).

The above episode provides material permitting some reflection on Jesus’ divine agency and healing ministry. Jesus as the Agent restores the normal relationship between the father and his son. Because of the demonic possession the boy was unable to function properly not only concerning his own affairs but also in relation to his father and others who happened to be around him. His unpredictable violent behavior has effected disruption in what used to be normal, proper, unbroken and functional in the course of his daily life. In other words it is the demon who carries responsibility for the destruction of the Original Positive State (OPS) that used to exist and be the normal living condition of the young boy. The text does not specify whether the demonic possession resulted from the boy’s own fault or anybody’s fault whatsoever. This question is not relevant either for the Synoptic Jesus or for the gospel narrative. This is in line with the fact that even though the Synoptic Jesus identifies the existence and pernicious ramifications of the Negative State (NS) he doesn’t seem to blame humans for it. During this exorcism episode the boy is clearly presented as the victim of demonic powers which neither he nor anybody else could restrain. The goal of the demonic takeover of the boy’s freedom, making him do what was harmful to him, was to crush him (συντρίβω, Lk 9:39) or according to the parallel version of Mark to destroy him (ἀπόλλυμι, Mk 9:22). The healing action of the Agent consists in annihilating the power of the demon and restoring the boy’s proper functionality in his daily life.

The same interchangeable meaning of exorcism and healing is attested in the exorcism of a blind and dumb demoniac (δαιμονιζόμενος τυφλὸς καὶ κωφός) in Matthew 12:22. Here the text doesn't even mention the expulsion of the demon. Instead it simply relates that Jesus healed (θεραπεύω) the demoniac and the man was able to speak and see (καὶ ἐθεράπευσεν αὐτόν, ὥστε τὸν κωφὸν λαλεῖν καὶ βλέπειν, Mt 12:22). That is a very important detail. Instead of having an action of expelling the demon (ἐκβάλλω, Mt 9:33; Mk 7:26) or rebuking him (ἐπιτιμάω, Mt 17:18; Lk 4:35), or confirming that the demon came out (ἐξέρχομαι, Mk 7:29; Lk 11:14) of the possessed person, the entire action of getting rid of the demons and the disease is described as healing (θεραπεύω).

The flexibility with which Luke and Matthew use the concept of healing and exorcism as having synonymous theological meaning comes with the comparison of their texts with those of Mark. The healing of the epileptic boy, and the exorcism at a distance of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter illustrate the point. For Mark both episodes are classical exorcisms, meaning the expulsion of evil spirits without any linguistic references to healing (Mk 7 :24; 9:14-29). For Matthew, however, the expelling of the demon from the Syrophoenician woman's daughter carries a healing verb (ἰάομαι, Mt 15:28). Luke has no parallel text of this episode. The same shift from the meaning of exorcism as the mere expulsion of the demon to the healing dimension of the exorcism comes with the comparison of the narrative about the epileptic boy. Both Luke (ἰάομαι, Lk 9:42) and Matthew (θεραπεύω, Mt 17:16, 18) insert healing references.

It is interesting to notice that in the Synoptic exorcism stories devils appear as non-theological entities. In the previous sections I have mentioned some exorcisms as non-theological events in reference to demoniacs. In those instances for the possessed person a miraculous liberation from a devil meant above all the restoration of physical and mental faculties to their proper functioning. In other words such an exorcism produces identical results when compared to other non-demonic restorations. Some exorcisms may cause a desire to follow Jesus once the demoniac is free of the oppressive spirit (Mk 5:18). That indicates some theological implications for the healed person. In both types of exorcism, whether or not the act of healing caused a spiritual transformation of a person, the demon seems to be unrelated to a spiritual life of its victim. In the Synoptic narratives the possessing demons neither theologize, show an explicit opposition to God, incite rebellion against the Law, nor push toward immorality, etc. Those attitudes would be somehow expected from devils, especially according to the early Christian tradition. Rather, the possessing demons act more like secular entities, although aware and knowledgeable of divine realities. They enjoy inhabiting a person (Mt 12:43-45) as well as inflicting physical and mental torment. They might be better defined as powerful spiritual parasites rather than individual strongholds of an anti-God guerilla.

Jesus' Authority and Power in Performance of Restorative Miracles

For the Synoptics Jesus possessed all authority (ἐξουσία) in heaven and on earth as something *given* (ἐδόθη) to him (Mt 28:18). By equipping his Agent with unprecedented power and authority God enabled his Delegate to perform mighty deeds (αἱ δυνάμεις) and to do so within the realm of his own discretion. Jesus' deeds of power include restorative miracles or healings of both physical illnesses and demonic inhabitations. God entrusted to his Agent *all* the authority so that the earthly Christ has no need of human approval of his works. In virtue of this authority Jesus can correct religious interpretations of his contemporaries and even act contrary to the commonly accepted religious practices and regulations. Jesus' restorative miracles sometimes coincide with the violation of the Sabbath (Mt 12:10; Mk 3:2; Lk 13:14). The same can be said about his practice of socializing with "sinners," (Lk 15:2). This un-Lawful behavior might be explained by the urgency and importance of transferring people from the Negative State (NS) to the new reality of the Kingdom, or Restored Positive State (RPS). This is also implied in Jesus' saving function where he plays the role of both the physician and the rescuer. The supreme value of rescuing and healing, namely "saving," overrides any other concerns. When the choice lies between saving, and destroying by doing nothing, the Divine Agent opts for the positive action: "is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" (ἔξεστιν τῷ σαββάτῳ ἀγαθοποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀπολέσαι; Lk 6:9). Thus Jesus' authority manifested during restorative miracles not only

derives from the Sender as the part of proper equipping of the Agent, but also from the Agent's own divine identity. Through his authority the Divine Messenger offers a moral principle for the legitimacy of the restorative actions. This principle is based upon a hierarchy of values where saving person's life (temporal and eternal) comes as an absolute priority. In the context of the restorative pattern of *rapha*, rescuing from and annihilating the pernicious influence of the NS not only legitimizes Jesus' actions but most importantly fills them with meaning.

The Role of Repentance in Jesus' Action of Restoration

The first public step in Jesus' ministry of divine restoration comes with a call to reformation.¹¹ He understands the purpose of his coming to this world as

¹¹ The Synoptic concepts of *repentance*, *conversion*, and *reformation* are expressed by the Greek words *metanoëō* and *metanoia*. According to the study of Johannes Behm, "μετανοέω, μεάνοια," *TDNT* 4:975-80; 989-1008, both the verb μετανοέω, and the noun μεάνοια are rare in the classical Greek and appear more frequently in *koine*. In the non-biblical usage the verb μετανοέω can signify "to note after," "to change one's mind (νοῦς)," meaning "to adopt another view," "to change one's feelings." Consequently, explains Behm, "if the change of mind derives from recognition that the earlier view was foolish, improper or evil, there arises the sense 'to regret,' 'to feel remorse,' 'to rue,'" (977). The meaning of the noun μεάνοια relates to that of the verb indicating "later knowledge," "subsequent emendation," "change of mind," as well as "regret," "remorse." Behm observes: "This expresses dissatisfaction with thoughts cherished, plans followed, acts performed, etc. In the dissatisfaction there may reside no more than the wish that these things had not been thought, willed, or done, even though good... With further development both verb and noun then come to mean 'change of mind,' 'repentance,' in an emotional and volitional sense as well. The change of opinion or decision, the alteration in mood or feeling, which finds expression in the terms, is not in any sense ethical. It may be for the bad as well as the good. In the latter case, when μεάνοια denotes a change in moral judgment, regret for wrongs, etc., which have been committed, the reference is always to an individual instance of change of judgment or remorse in respect of a specific act which is now no longer approved. For the Greeks μεάνοια never suggests an alteration in the total moral attitude, a profound change in life's direction, a conversion which affects the whole of conduct... The Hellenistic philosophers use μεάνοια predominantly in the intellectual sense, though the ethical element is also included. By a penitent alteration of judgment, by reconsideration, e.g., by the correction of a mistaken view, the fool becomes a wise man," (978-80). Yet, according to Behm the NT understanding of μετανοέω and μεάνοια is unrelated to the classical Greek usage (980). Instead it derives from the

urging sinners to conversion (μετάνοια, Lk 5:32). Jesus calls to repent (μετανοέω) on the basis of the Kingdom of Heaven being at hand (Mt 3:2, Mk 1:15). The reformation is not optional since those who don't repent will perish (ἀπόλλυμι, Lk 13:5). Yet, at the same time Luke 15:7 by saying that there will be greater joy in heaven over one sinner who has repented than over ninety-nine righteous ones suggests that some may not need repentance in order to enter into heaven. Repentance for forgiveness of sins, (μετάνοιαν εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, Lk 24:47) like the good news (εὐαγγέλιον, Mk 16:15), should be proclaimed in Jesus' name to all the nations (Lk 24:47). In this context Jesus' miracles have a pragmatic purpose; to facilitate repentance.¹² He severely rebukes the cities that were privileged to witness his mighty deeds (δυνάμεις) but did not repent (Mt 11:20).

In the schema of form critical patterns of *rapha* we have seen that human conversion or repentance had the power to activate divine action of restoration. On the other hand, the lack of internal reformation resulted in the ongoing punishment and prolongation of the Negative State (NS). Sometimes physical healings depended on personal conversion. For Jesus the idea of repentance (μετάνοια) is not intrinsically related to physical healings even though sin might be related to sickness. Instead *metanoia* indicates the initial phase of change, a proof that an individual is ready to abandon the NS and undertake the process of

OT theological perspectives where in the LXX μετανοέω approximates ἐπιστρέφω which is used to render the Hebrew concept of return and as well as ethical and religious conversion expressed by שׁוּב. In this way μετανοέω refers "not merely to the individual case of penitent change of mind but to an alteration in total attitude, to the relation to God which embraces the whole of life, to a change in nature which results from a reorientation brought about by God," (989-90).

¹² So argues also Johannes Behm interpreting Jesus' performance of miracles as "a summons to conversion." Behm, *TDNT* 4:1002.

transition, or healing. That transition is supposed to lead to the attainment of the Positive State.¹³ Even though the process of repentance entails a moral reformation from a sinful lifestyle it is primarily an internal disposition indicating openness to the reception of a new reality. This new reality is the Kingdom of God and its righteousness (ζητεῖτε δὲ πρῶτον τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ, Mt 6:33) or its own logic often different from the logic of the world. The hardness of heart makes Jesus grieve because it stands in direct contrast to *metanoia* and precludes one from entering the Kingdom (συλλυπούμενος ἐπὶ τῇ παρώσει τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν, Mk 3:5).

In the restorative model of *rapha* there was a strong insistence on conversion (*shuv*). The notion of repentance (*shuv*) appeared as an essential requirement for the action of *rapha* to take place in the theological employments of the verb. Theological applications of *rapha* entailed religious, spiritual, or moral contexts. For the most part, theological usage of *rapha* related to a spiritual dimension but at times it was connected to a physical healing. In some

¹³ In this way the *metanoia* assumes an instrumental character with a transitional force leading toward the Positive State or the Kingdom of God. In regards to the nature of the *metanoia* preached by Jesus and its relation to the Kingdom J. Behm writes: "The teaching of Jesus according to the Synoptists μετανοεῖτε is again the imperative which is indissolubly bound up with the indicative of the message of the βασιλεία (Mk 1:15; Mt 4:17)... God's definitive revelation demands final and unconditional decision on man's part. It demands radical conversion, a transformation of nature, a definitive turning from evil, a resolute turning to God in total obedience... The conversion is once-for-all. There can be no going back, only advance in responsible movement along the way now taken. It affects the whole man, first and basically the centre of personal life, then logically his conduct at all times and in all situations, his thoughts, words and acts... The whole proclamation of Jesus, with its categorical demand for the sake of God's kingdom ... is a proclamation of unconditional turning to God, of unconditional turning from all that is against God, not merely that which is downright evil, but that which in a given case makes total turning to God impossible... The demand for conversion is the one and only imperative in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God. It is addressed to all without distinction and presented with unmitigated severity in order to indicate the only way of salvation there is. It calls for total surrender, total commitment to the will of God." Behm, *TDNT*, 4:1001-2.

of those theological usages of *rapha* the materialization of healing of a person or the restoration of an inanimate object was conditioned by repentance. In contrast, in Jesus' restorative miracles there is no element of repentance as a condition or pre-requisite for the healing/exorcism to take place. This appears as a contradiction to the strong Synoptic emphasis on *metanoia*. On the other hand, the paradox of restoration without conversion becomes coherent when we consider that there are two layers in Jesus' restorative miracles.¹⁴ The non-theological layer related to the healings of body and mind required no repentance just as it was in secular usages of *rapha*. These restorations without repentance on the part of the object of healing function as attestations of Jesus' compassion, might, and the genuine character of his divine agency. Since their primary goal is to say something about Jesus or an attitude leading to Jesus, there is no need for the *metanoia* element. Secondly the absence of the requirement for repentance as a condition for restoration relates to the inclusion of the figure of Satan. As we have seen, the responsibility for the Disruption of the OPS lies with the Devil whereas people are more of a (participating) victim of that Disruption rather than its real cause. Thus, physical and mental maladies reflect more the reality of the Negative State (NS) of the whole world than a punishment for

¹⁴ Sometimes, the beginning of the allegorization of Gospel accounts is attributed to the early Church Fathers. This process would involve a distinction between a literal and spiritual meaning of the narratives. Yet, the scrutiny of Synoptic restorative miracles as well as the notion of a universal spiritual restoration of Jesus the Divine Agent indicates that such a distinction existed already in the minds of the Evangelists. Unlike Paul's explicit Christology, gospel narratives prefer a double-layer Christology where the reader needs to make his or her own discovery about the *true* identity of Jesus and the *real* meaning of his actions.

personal religious or moral transgressions. For this reason the person benefiting from Jesus' restorative miracles needs no prior repentance.

Things are different when it comes to the restoration of a spiritual character. In these cases *metanoia* is a condition for the healing to take place: "unless you repent you will all likewise perish," (ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήτε πάντες ὁμοίως ἀπολείσθete (Lk 13:3, 5; Mt 13:5). Following (ἀκολουθέω), welcoming, accepting and believing in Jesus implies a transformative experience of *metanoia*. Such a transformation doesn't need ostensible or dramatic external signs. It is rather something internal and implied although producing visible results. This transforming experience is centered upon the encounter with Jesus, yet without a precise chronological order. For the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:18-19), Bartimaeus of Jericho (Mk 10:52), and some women including Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:1-2) the internal transformation seems to take place after Jesus' restorative action. In other words, first we have the healing, then personal transformation (*metanoia*) and thirdly a genuine desire, or the actual following of Jesus. But in the cases of a sinful woman in Simon's house (Lk 7:36- 50) and the rich tax-collector Zaccheus (Lk 19:1-10) the attitude of repentance appears to precede both the physical encounter with Jesus and his restorative action.

The healing of the blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52), the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:1-20), and possibly the restoration of certain women (Lk 8:1-2) illustrate how a physical restoration turns into a spiritual experience. These physical/mental restorations had an initial non-theological character. Yet, in addition to producing a physical benefit they prompted a spiritual awakening.

This awakening creates new attitudes toward Jesus resulting in following or becoming his sympathizer. What we see in this case is the transition of the restorative action passing from a physical to a spiritual dimension of a human being. The transition starts at a non-theological level or layer and projects itself over the spiritual sphere. Even though this is not attested in all individual restorative miracles, it is the critical point of the Synoptic theology. Healings and exorcisms indicate the transition of the restorative power from the visible, literal, material layer to the invisible, spiritual, and theological stratum.

The physical layer in Jesus' restorations might be compared to the secular usage of *rapha*. But the real emphasis, the *real* restoration is spiritual and theological. The physical aspects are only illustrative and didactic. This does not mean that they are fake expressions of Jesus' concern for the suffering. To the contrary, they are real manifestations of his compassion and love for humankind suffering from physical and mental maladies. But his sympathy and love for people suffering spiritually is incomparably more intense and compelling. Spiritual healing is so urgent and vital that Jesus is ready to give his life for it. The extent and gravity of spiritual sickness is not understandable to people. They live in the gloomy reality and oppressions of the Negative State (NS) and might not even realize that without being rescued they might end up in the eternal NS beyond the earthy existence. The best way to sensitize unaware multitudes who sit in ignorance and the shadow of death (Mt 4:16) is to draw an analogy between physical illness or dysfunction and spiritual sickness. Even a healing on a physical level restores hopes, receives visions and new

perspectives from their dead status and grants to the healed a brand new life. The projection of the meaning of this restorative power over the spiritual dimension renders Jesus' healings even more significant.

There is a unifying element for both layers of Jesus' healings. Whether purely physical or deeply spiritual restoration, both require faith on the part of person in need of healing. For physical restorations it is the faith in its rudimental form of a firm conviction that a healing will happen because of the great thaumaturgical powers of the Agent. For spiritual restorations it is the faith that both the Agent and his deeds have divine accreditation. It is the faith that gives credibility to the person and the message of the Divine Envoy. It is the faith that his words, gestures, and deeds go beyond the boundaries of the material and present world. Such a faith takes for granted that what the Agent said and accomplished has an eternal value and that a person who believes it can benefit from it forever.

Jesus' Teaching as the Means of Restoration

In the process of transition from a Negative State (NS) to a Restored Positive State (RPS) the teaching of Jesus, the Agent of Restoration, functions as the means of healing. According to the Matthean explanation of Jesus' speaking in parables when the instructions of the Agent are accepted, then a person willingly undertakes the process of conversion (*metanoia*) and consequently obtains healing (Mt 13:10-15, cf. Isa 6:10). From this fragment one

can distinguish five interrelated elements: 1) disposition of openness for the instruction of the Divine Messenger, 2) understanding of the teaching, 3) actual acceptance of his message, 4) conversion and, 5) healing. Many listeners of Jesus' parables won't be healed because they are missing the first element necessary for the completion of internal restoration. They lack an attitude of openness characterized already by Isaiah as hearts grown dull, ears hard of hearing and eyes closed (Mt 14:15, Isa 6:10). Speaking in parables is a test for the confirmation of the right internal disposition. Consequently, the wrong internal disposition prevents understanding of the teaching which in turn obstructs conversion and subsequent healing. In this way the teaching of the Messenger appears as a spiritual remedy leading to healing (ἰάομαι, Mt 13:15). From the Markan perspective this healing brought by the acceptance of Jesus' teaching, or the Gospel, means forgiveness of sins. While Matthew writes in the final part of the verse "and turn to me to heal them, (καὶ ἐπιστρέψουσιν καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς, Mt 13:15), Mark says "may not be converted and be forgiven," (μήποτε ἐπιστρέψουσιν καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς, Mk 4:12). Once again the Synoptic thought equates *healing* with *forgiveness of sins*. It is the teaching, or the Gospel of the Divine Envoy that has such medicinal spiritual properties. From this perspective the impact of Jesus' teaching is similar to the impact of physical healing/exorcism that passes into the spiritual dimension of a person. Both listening to the Gospel and obtaining physical healing/exorcism may radiate upon the spiritual layer and make the healed a follower of Christ.

A similar view equating Jesus' teaching (mission) with healing comes from Luke's account of the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth (Lk 4:16-30). In contrast to Mark (6:1-6) and Matthew (13:53-58) Luke in his parallel version does not focus on Jesus' inability to do miracles in Nazareth; instead, he places more attention on Jesus' rejection and the contempt for his divine mission of a healer by his fellow Nazarenes. Jesus implies that he is a physician (ἰατρός, Lk 4:23), sent by God to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Lk 4:18). In his quality of Divine Envoy, Jesus enjoys the assistance of the Spirit of the Lord and he comes to preach good news (εὐαγγελίζω) to the poor (Lk 4:18). This defines Jesus' healing activity in a larger perspective of Restoration. Indeed, all these activities become a part of his healing action. His healing means preaching the Gospel, recovery of sight from spiritual ignorance of the lost OPS and blindness to the joyful hope of recovery or attaining RPS, which is the arrival and fullness of the Kingdom of God. This healing is also the liberation from demonic oppression. Spiritual blindness is healed by the remedy of the good news and in this sense Jesus' entire teaching activity and proclamation, the Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον), assumes the character of medicine, or the means of restoration. As previously noted in Jesus' discourses, human responsibility for the Disruption of the OPS is absent (in contrast to Paul). His focus is more on the miserable condition that people experience in the Negative State (NS). Luke's account of the rejection in Nazareth supports this perspective where the recipients of the overall healing/restorative action of the Divine Messenger are said to be poor (πτωχός)

perhaps not so much in terms of possession but spiritual impoverishment of the NS.¹⁵ While the *poor* indicate the *sick*, the action of *preaching good news* means *healing*.

Universal Restoration of Humanity

Jesus' restoration from the Negative State (NS) to the Restored Positive State (RPS) shows indications of a universal character. This kind of Restoration transcends the literal tier of individual restorative miracles exemplified by physical healings and liberations from demonic oppression. In addition to restorative mighty deeds, the spirit of Restoration is attested also in other actions and teachings of the Agent.

Healings and exorcisms constitute a material foundation for theological extrapolations of the literary layer of the restorative events. These events are filled with words that have a double or sometimes multiple meaning. The first meaning is intelligible within the context of a specific restorative miracle while the second implies a large, spiritual and universal theological range of these words. For example the verb $\sigma\upsilon\zeta\omega$ has both a literal and the theological meaning which

¹⁵ In his assessment of the Lukan word "poor" Joel B. Green rejects interpretations proposing either "spiritually poor" or "economically poor." He argues that these two categories are "inadequately grounded in ancient Mediterranean culture and the social world of Luke-Acts," and submits "holistic" as the most appropriate description. Consequently, writes Green "It is thus evident that Jesus' mission is directed to the poor – defined not merely in subjective, spiritual or personal, economic terms, but in the holistic sense of those who are for any of a number of socio-religious reasons relegated to positions outside the boundaries of God's people. By directing his good news to these people, Jesus indicates his refusal to recognize those socially determined boundaries, asserting instead that even these 'outsiders' are the objects of divine grace. Others may regard such people as beyond the pale of salvation, but God has opened a way for them to belong to God's family." Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 211.

can be used in three different contexts: physical restoration (Lk 17:19), individual spiritual restoration (Lk 7:50) or universal spiritual restoration (Mt 1:21; Lk 19:10).

Most of the theologically indicative words come usually in mutual contrast to either the action they indicate (verbs) or the image they represent (nouns). They either pertain to the sad reality of the NS or indicate the transitional action and effects of the upcoming RPS. They are also associated with the contrasting figures of Jesus, the Agent, and his opponent Satan. Among the recurring words and images associated with the NS are the verbs: to destroy (ἀπόλλυμι, Mk 9:2), to perish (ἀπόλλυμι, Mt 8:25), to be lost (ἀπόλλυμι, Lk 15:6), to bind (δέω, Lk 13:16), to torment (βασανίζω, Mt 8:6), to suffer (πάσχω, Mt 17:15), as well as the nouns: illness (ἀσθένεια, Lk 5:15,) sickness (μαλακία, Mt 4:23), disease (νόσος, Mk 1:34), bond (δεσμός, Lk 13:16), affliction (μάστιξ, Mk 3:10). Negative images are those describing the demoniac foaming at the mouth (Lk 9:39), being thrown into water and fire (Mk 9:22), being slammed to the ground (Lk Lk 9:42), made to convulse (Mk 9:20), gashing himself (Mk 5:5), screaming (Mk 5:7), living in tombs (Mt 8:22). Lists of physical disabilities are also indicative of the Negative State: the blind (τυφλοὶ), the lame (χωλοὶ), the lepers (λεπροὶ), the deaf (κωφοὶ) the crippled (κυλλοὺς), the dead (νεκροὶ), the poor (πτωχοὶ), etc. (Mt 11:5; 15:30; Lk 7:22).

Among the Positive concepts are the verbs: to heal (ιάομαι, Mt 8:13), to cure (θεραπεύω, Mt 17:16), to rescue (ρύομαι, Lk 1:74) to release (λύω,), to redeem (λυτρόω, Lk 24:21), to save (σώζω, Mt 1:21), the expressions “go in peace,” (ὑπαγε εἰς εἰρήνην, Mk 5:34), and “be healed,” (ἴσθι ὑγιής, Mk 5:34). The upcoming

Positive State transpires also through the positive concepts of ransom (λύτρον, Mt 20:28), forgiveness of sins (ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν, Mt 26:28), salvation (σωτηρία, Lk 19:9), etc. The images of the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, the blind seeing (Mt 15:31), the lepers cleansed, the deaf hearing, the dead raised up (Mt 11:5), hungry crowds being fed (Mk Mk 6:34-44), people encouraged not to fear (Mt 10:31), crowds glorifying God for the restorative miracles (Mt 9:8, Lk 5:25), and being called to rejoice because of divine salvation (Lk 15:32). Images of Jesus' compassion or divine mercy (Mt 9:36; Lk 6:36), forgiveness of sins (Mt 9:2), images of the found lost sheep (Lk 15:1-7), the lost coin and of the return of the prodigal son (Lk 15:8-32) represent God's feeling toward sinners. All these words and images derive from the joyous fullness of divine Restoration.

More negative and positive linguistic expressions and images could be added. The above however sufficiently illustrate the point. The negative and positive expressions are at least two-dimensional in the Synoptic narratives. The evangelists want the reader to perceive and discover the theological significance of these words and images. In contrast, for the Pauline letters and other epistles of the NT these concepts are explicit. For example *to save* in relation to Jesus has only one meaning: the action of accomplishing eternal salvation for humankind. Similarly, the verb *to perish* in its theological meaning implies eternal damnation in hell. But the Synoptics are not devoid of the theological meaning of these images and words although this meaning is only implied, sometimes quite emphatically. It is in the theological meaning of those negative

and positive expressions that we find the concept of universal Restoration, or universal healing.

The strongest objection to the assertion that the Synoptic Jesus had in mind universal Restoration might come from his statement that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Mt 15:24).¹⁶ This comes in the context of Jesus' initial refusal to heal the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman from her demonic oppression. Yet, as the narrative confirms, Jesus did liberate the young Gentile girl from the devil. He also healed the servant of the centurion, a Roman official (Lk 7:1-10), and cleansed a Samaritan leper (Lk 17:16-19). In his post-resurrection commissioning of the apostles Jesus commands them to go into the whole world making disciples of all the nations (μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, Mt

¹⁶ According to E. P. Sanders the fact that Matthew depicts on the one hand the resistance of Jesus and the disciples to the Gentiles (Mt 15:21-28) and on the other hand has Jesus perform a healing for the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman "underlines the view that Gentiles who have faith can participate in the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus... It is then not surprising that, according to Matthew, Jesus said, 'many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness' (Matt 8. 11f.)." However, Sanders speculates that this attitude of limited openness toward Gentiles needs to be attributed to the evangelist himself rather than to the historical Jesus of whose position we cannot be sure: "We must suspect that the most favourable statements about Gentiles (Matt. 8.10 and 15.28, on the greatness of the faith of two individual Gentiles) are Matthew's creation. Consequently, we cannot be absolutely sure what Jesus' own view about Gentiles was. On general grounds, I am inclined to think that he expected at least some Gentiles to turn to the God of Israel and to participate in the coming kingdom... Jesus' hope for the kingdom fits into long-standing and deeply held hopes among the Jews, who continued to look for God to redeem his people and constitute a new kingdom, one in which Israel would be secure and peaceful, and one in which Gentiles would serve the God of Israel." Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1993), 192-93. In his earlier work, Sanders offers a more detailed discussion of Jesus' and the Evangelists' view of the Gentiles: *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 212-21. Sanders' interpretation of Jesus' perception of the Kingdom of God as a political entity is presently a scholarly minority position. In any case his speculation relates to the historical person of Jesus while my interest in this dissertation concerns the theology of the Synoptic Jesus where his saving mission undoubtedly reaches and includes the Gentiles.

28:19).¹⁷ The only restriction to his universal salvation consists not in ethnic or national boundaries but in the reception or rejection of the Gospel proclamation and the presence or absence of faith (Mk 16:15-16).

The universality of Jesus' Restoration is also suggested by the frequent usage of the expression *many* (πολλοὺς γὰρ ἐθεράπευσεν), and *all* (πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ἐθεράπευσεν) in the narratives of restorative miracles (Mt 8:16; Mk 1:34; 3:10; 12:15; Lk 4:40). The Agent heals and frees from demonic oppression large crowds (ὄχλοι πολλοί, Mt 15:30; 19:2; Mk 1:34), and heals *all* kinds of sickness and *all* kinds of diseases (πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν, Mt 4:23). In summary he healed *all* those oppressed by the devil (ἰώμενος πάντας τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου, Acts 10:38). Certainly, the expressions *all*, *every*, *all kinds*, function as hyperbole in the reference to Jesus' earthly activity. Their meaning, however, retains its force when Jesus' Restoration is taken as a universal event.

¹⁷ If both types of Jesus' attitudes attested in the Gospels, that is, his extension of healings and exorcisms to the Gentiles and his apparent reluctance to do so correspond to the mindset of the historical Jesus then one may assume that he intentionally confined the main thrust of his ministry of spiritual healing and restoration to Israel while planning the future expansion of that mission through his disciples. So thought also Thomas W. Manson while writing: "Jesus saw the immediate task as that of creating such a community within Israel, in the faith that it would transform the life of his own people, and that a transformed Israel would transform the world." Manson, *Only to the House of Israel? Jesus and the Non-Jews* (Facet Books. Biblical Series 9. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 23-24.

Chapter 3

Synoptic Healing Patterns in Relation to Those of the Hebrew Bible

We have already seen that Jesus' restorative actions have shown both similarities and differences in comparison to the form critical patterns of *rapha/marpe*. It appears to me that the major reason for these differences results from the introduction of a new element of extreme theological relevance, namely, the figure of Satan. This introduction of the Devil into the overall equation of the restorative process has affected ideas concerning the meaning and nature of various theological stages related to restoration as well as to the conceptual shape of the Restoration itself. The Synoptics, as well as the rest of the New Testament, merge two distinctive restorative visions attested in the Hebrew Bible. During the analysis of the theological characteristics of healing/restoration in the OT we discerned two independent, perhaps complementary, understandings of the restorative process. The first and the predominant model came out of the form critical sequence of the verb *rapha* and the noun *marpe* occurring in the Historical and Prophetic literature. I designated this type of *marpe* as *marpe*^{HP}. Theological trajectories of *rapha* and *marpe*^{HP} are essentially the same, so when speaking of *rapha* I always imply *marpe*^{HP}. The second model comes from theological perspectives of the noun *marpe* employed in wisdom literature, which I labeled as *marpe*^W. The NT conflates and overlaps the two OT models into its own vision of the restorative action and results produced by Jesus Christ, the Agent of divine Restoration.

Synoptic Healing Theology in Relation to Form Critical Patterns of *rapha*

Jesus' healings show similarities with the form critical trajectories of *rapha* passages whether in their secular or theological employment. We have identified an Original Positive State (OPS) and a Restored Positive State (RPS) in the Hebrew Bible. The OPS meant the existence or condition of proper functionality and conformity with its intended usage or purpose. It referred to objects, people, physical body, mind, and spiritual dimension as well as abstract concepts. The OPS indicated a state of being or functioning before the disruption took place. It was the state of wholeness, health, and harmony whether in its literary or metaphorical meaning. The RPS referred to the state of being or functioning that reaches its completion after the process of repairing, fixing, restoring, or healing. Also the RPS could relate to both secular and theological forms of restoration. It became clear that the RPS was not a simple return of the condition of the lost OPS. Instead, the RPS indicated something new in comparison with the OPS even though the two states shared the same essence. As we stated, the action of *rapha* did not consist in simply deleting the negative effects of Disruption and magically transferring "healed" objects, people, states, etc., to their pre-disruptive stage. On the contrary, the restorative process of *rapha* had a re-creative character. To be sure, the action of *rapha* is not creative as if *ex nihilo*. Instead, it re-creates taking as the base and essence something as it existed in its pre-disruptive phase. It retains the essential characteristic of the OPS but at the

same time adds some new qualities. In this way the RPS is qualitatively superior to the OPS. Some of these features are also visible in the process of Restoration conducted by the Synoptic Jesus.

Jesus' healing action, understood as individual restorative miracles, teaching of the Gospel and the universal spiritual Restoration, appears as something new and superior to what was indicated by the OPS. After the exorcism of a demoniac in the synagogue the bystanders wondered in disbelief "What is this? A new teaching (διδασχὴ καὶνὴ) with authority?" (Mk 1:27). Similarly, when speaking about the character of his mission and doctrine Jesus offers a parable of the new wine (οἶνον νέον) that cannot be contained in the old wineskins (ἄσκοὺς παλαιούς). Instead the new wine requires new wineskins (ἄσκοὺς καὶνούς), (Mk 2:22). Jesus' restoration offers new elements when compared to the OPS. These new elements emanate from the reality of the RPS. They imply a new religious mentality, a new vision of God and his role in human existence and a new lifestyle matching that newness. The significance of *metanoia* comes here into play. As we remember, in the form critical sequence of *rapha* the idea of reformation (*shuv*) was a constant requirement for spiritual healing. When we take *metanoia* not simply as an internal moral regret for committed sins but also as a turn of perspective, a change of old views that used to conform to the standards of the NS, then we may enlarge the meaning of repentance with new restorative features. Thus, *metanoia* will indicate attitudes and predispositions to think and act according to the new standards, those of the

RPS. It is the change of perceptions, judgments and attitudes that makes of *metanoia* the means of comprehension and reception of the benefits of the RPS.

At the stage of Jesus' earthly ministry the RPS is only a materializing idea in its initial phases. Not even the death and resurrection of Christ might be identified with the RPS. The RPS is an ideal that will fully attain its completion when the entire cosmos finalizes its healing process. The RPS belongs to the eschaton, after the Son of Man returns in his glory. Yet, even though the RPS is still distant in the future, its ideals, morality, and new perspectives are already made present in the world through the ministry of Jesus.¹ The RPS is both an

¹ This characteristic of the RPS classifies it as an eschatological reality. After a brief review of major categories of Jesus' eschatology in the present scholarship I will return to the discussion of the eschatological nature of the RPS.

David E. Aune. "Early Christian Eschatology," *ABD* 2:594-609, groups scholarly approach to the gospel eschatology into four models: 1) The Consistent Eschatology Model. It proposes to understand Jesus as "an apocalypticist with an eschatological timetable," (p. 599) whose views should be understood against the background of early Jewish apocalyptic literature. In other words Jesus was an eschatological prophet whose predictions failed to be fulfilled (J. Weiss, A. Schweitzer, F. C. Burkitt, B. F. Easton, M. Dibelius, et. al.). 2) The Realized Eschatology Model. The term "realized eschatology" was coined by Charles Howard Dodd who maintained that the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus was not an apocalyptic concept. Instead the most distinctive feature of that Kingdom came from the emphasis on its "presence." Thus, the Kingdom of God is "the manifest and effective assertion of divine sovereignty against all the evil of the world," (600). 3) The Proleptic Eschatology Model. This position supported by J. Jeremias, O. Cullmann, W. G. Kümmel, and others, argues that Jesus held *both* understandings at the same time: the Kingdom of God was already a present reality but also a future expectation. Aune specifies "The label 'proleptic eschatology' is useful for indicating that there is a tension between present and future in Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God, in which the present is a critical stage in the full future realization of the kingdom of God. The position of consistent eschatology and realized eschatology can only be maintained by ignoring or minimizing present or future elements in the eschatological teaching of Jesus," (p. 600). 4) Models De-emphasizing Eschatology. This view questions the assumption that Jesus' teaching and actions were mainly determined by eschatology (T. F. Glasson, M. J. Borg, B. Mack, et. al.). Among the reasons supporting this position are the findings of some scholars that the coming of the Son of Man sayings are not authentic, that the notion of Jesus' eschatological Kingdom of God is largely absent in early Jewish apocalyptic literature, that the idea of the arrival of the Kingdom at the end of the world has no basis in Jesus' kingdom sayings as such, and that the eschatological understanding of Jesus finds a strong contrast in the *proverbial wisdom* contained in his teachings, particularly in Q.

Both the subject of Jesus' eschatology and the Kingdom of God continue stirring scholarly debate. For example, a critical analysis and almost a total rejection of C. H. Dodd's *realized eschatology* comes from Clayton Sullivan's study *Rethinking Realized Eschatology*

abstract concept and the ultimate state of existence of those who have accepted the healing force of Jesus' salvation. The frequent Synoptic concept of the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God is identical with the RPS. The arrival of the Kingdom of God (RPS), even with its partial disclosure and sporadic fulfillments, surpasses the reality of the OPS. The process of healing and restoration that the Divine Agent carries on offers benefits for humankind superior to the benefits of original creation, or specific covenants of the Old Testament.

(Macon, GA: Mercer University Press; Peeters, 1988) where he writes: "In decades to come, I suggest, the Kingdom version of realized eschatology will be viewed as an optimistic theory conceived on an English university campus... a theory reflecting the world-view of a well-intentioned English intellectual who failed to perceive that moral evil is still an intractable, tragic factor in human experience," (p. 115). Richard H. Hiers argued in defense of Jesus' strong eschatological orientation: "Jesus believed that the Present world was about to end, in fact, that certain preliminary events marking the last days of the Old world had already begun to occur, and that the final and decisive events – the coming of the Son of man, the Judgment, and the Kingdom of God – would take place soon. Not only did Jesus believe and proclaimed; he also acted accordingly." Hiers, *The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God: Present and Future in the Message and Ministry of Jesus* (University of Florida Humanities Monograph 38. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1973), iii. Similar perspective came, more recently, from John P. Meier: "We concluded that the future, definitive, and imminent arrival of God's kingly rule was central to Jesus' proclamation." Meier, *Marginal Jew*. 2:398.

If my concept of the RPS had to be assigned to one of the four major eschatological categories it would display most similarities not with the *realized* eschatology but rather with the *proleptic* model of eschatology. The RPS is an ideal that will reach its fulfillment in the future yet it already emanates its restorative force through the actions of the Synoptic Jesus and on the existential level in the present life of a believer. Carl E. Braaten spoke in similar terms about eschatological ethics and the proleptic presence of the kingdom: "The future of the kingdom does not cease to be distinctly future in the events in which it becomes proleptically present... The kingdom of God is the transcendent future of history which retains its ontological identity and priority in the process of determining the meanings of events in history and their moral implications... proleptic ethics is dualistic in the sense that the new reality of the future kingdom is already operative under the conditions of this present age... The future of the kingdom – though still future – makes a decisive difference in the present; that is, it releases power for new decisions... The proleptic presence of the kingdom of God makes possible a real participation in the new reality that it brings." Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics: Essays on the Theology and Ethics of the Kingdom of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1974), 117, 122.

Synoptic Healing Theology in Relation to Secular Usage of *rapha*

There is a basic similarity between the form critical stages of the verb *rapha* and the healing theology of the Synoptic Jesus. This is well illustrated when we adopt form critical patterns of the secular usage of *rapha* (fig. 1) for the context, meaning and action of Jesus' restoration. The analogy is based on five stages: 1) Original Positive State (OPS), 2) Disruption, 3) Negative State (NS), 4) Restoration (action of *rapha*), and 5) Restored Positive State (RPS). These five stages were inherent to the meaning and logic of the action of *rapha* in simple restorations, such as the restoration of a broken object. The object existed first in its original unbroken state, then it underwent a disruption resulting in a condition of brokenness that was restored (*rapha*) and the object emerged in its re-created, repaired state. This basic pattern is easily discernible in various phases related to Jesus' restorative action. Here also there are five distinct stages: 1) OPS when everything existed and functioned according to the original design of God, 2) Satan's Disruption, 3) Negative State that resulted from the demonic Disruption, 4) Christ's Restoration, and 5) the Kingdom of God. Below is a graphic representation of the concept:

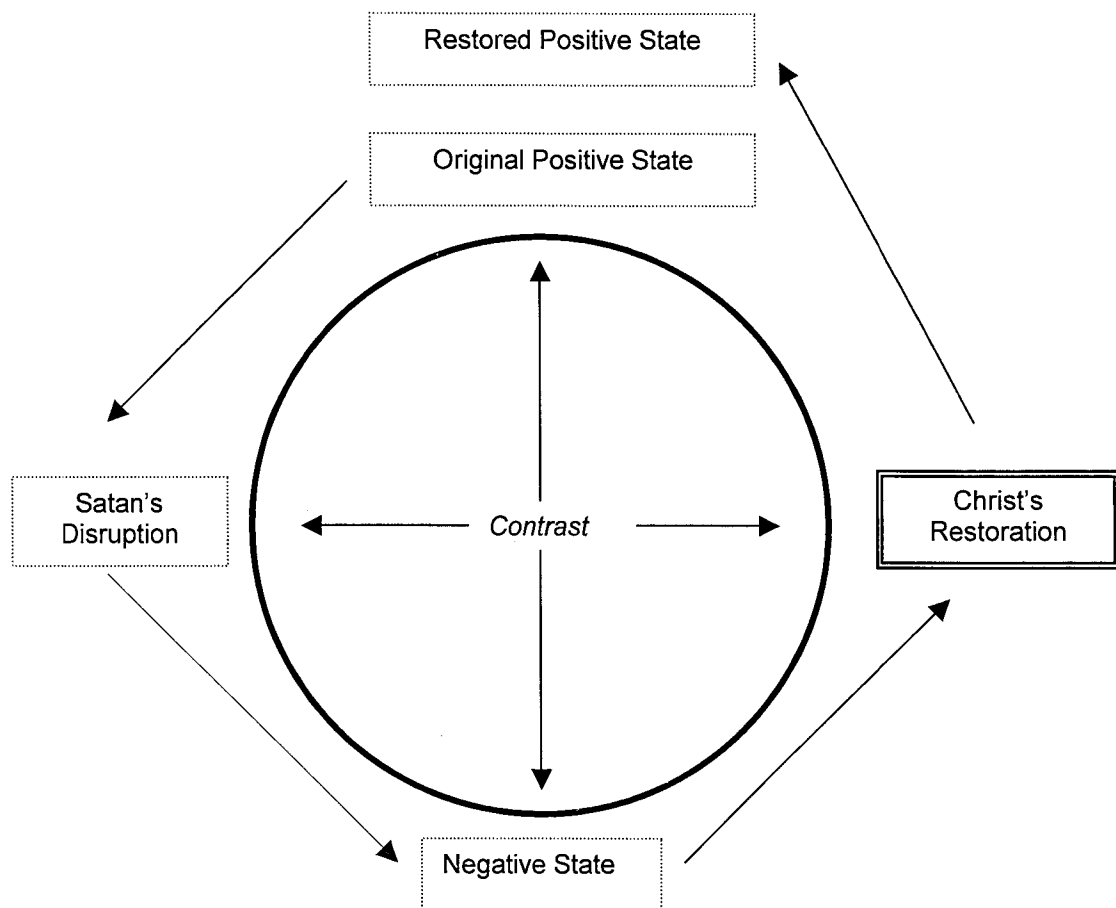


Figure 4. Synoptic healing patterns in relation to secular usage of *rapha*.

In the above illustration of the Synoptic restorative pattern, based on the secular usage of *rapha*, the Disruption and the Restoration do not directly involve humankind. Rather, they appear in terms of a cosmic, universal disruption of the original divine order by an opposing force. The two major entities involved in this process of Disruption/Restoration of the divine OPS are Satan and the Christ. The left side of the circle (fig. 4, marked by the space between OPS, Satan's Disruption, and NS) indicates the field of the disruptive action of Satan. The right

side of the circle (fig. 4, marked by the space between NS, Christ's Restoration, and RPS), indicates the field of the restorative action of Christ. This polarization between two cosmic powers, God and Satan, is clearly attested in the Synoptic references to the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan as well as by a host of other concepts that derive and emanate from the two opposite kingdoms (life-death, health-illness, etc.). Even though this cosmic struggle between the two powers can be viewed as a theological drama in itself, in the Synoptic narratives it is interpreted from the perspective and interests of the humankind.

Consequently, from the simple schema of the OPS disrupted by Satan and restored by Christ into the RPS arises a new, more complex, theological schema focused on the fate and interests of humankind. We will discuss this in the upcoming paragraphs.

Synoptic Healing Theology in Relation to Theological Usage of *rapha*

The set of theological stages transparent in the Synoptic theology of restoration conceptually coincides with the form critical patterns of the theological usage of *rapha* represented by fig. 2. Below is a graphic representation of how the Synoptic healing/restoration patterns correspond with the form critical ranges of *rapha*.

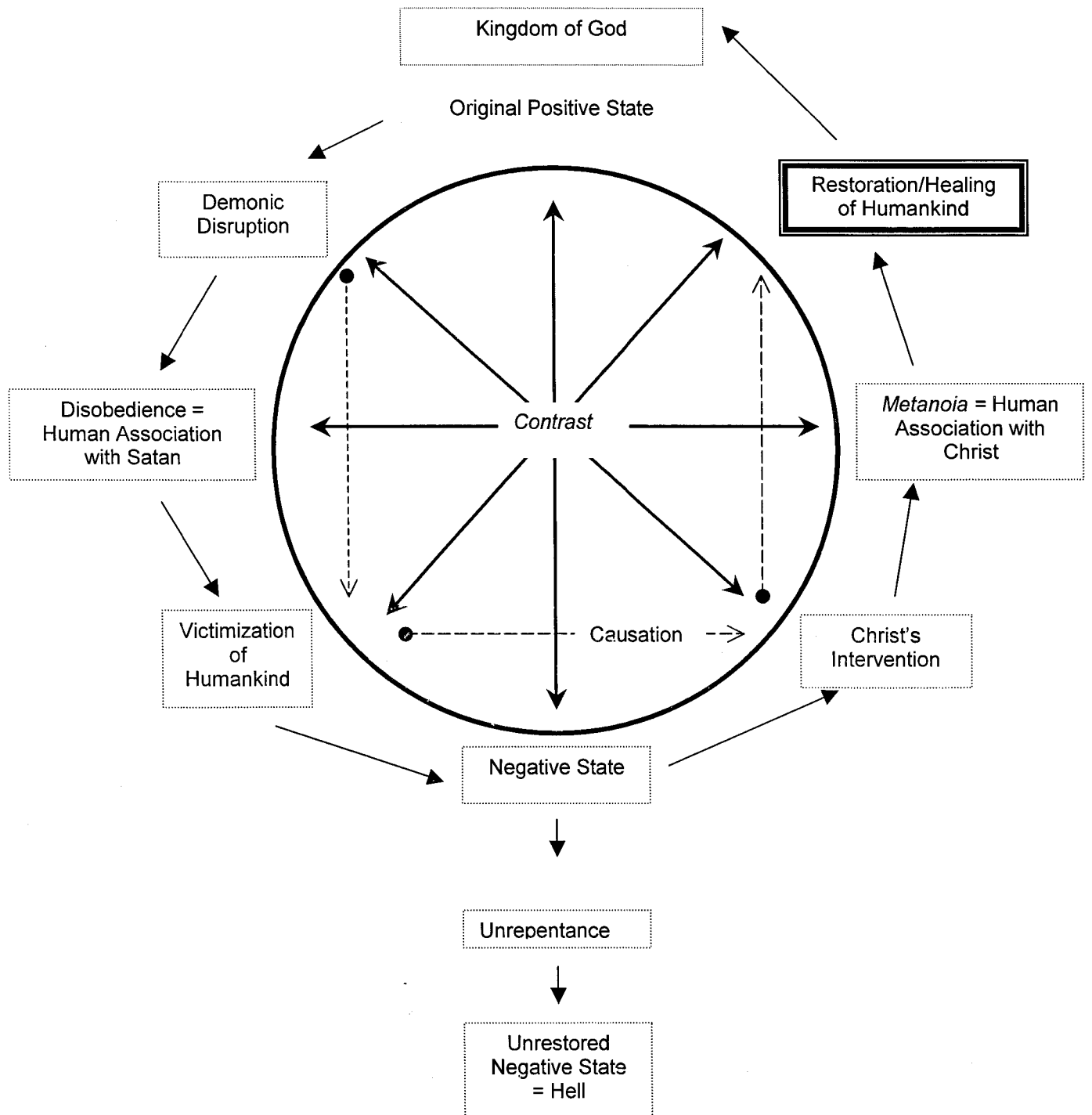


Figure 5. Synoptic healing theology in relation to theological usage of *rapha*.

According to the above representation the OPS suffers not a Human Disruption (HD), as in the *rapha* case, but a Demonic Disruption. Only in the second phase humankind associates itself with Satan through their disobedience (Adam's transgression, Gen 3). The primary responsibility, however, rests on Satan who in his treachery has misled humankind. In this sense people became victims of Devil's deceit, although they still bear some responsibility for their own actions. The subsequent stage, the NS, indicates the influence of Satan over humankind, distance from God, sin and illness. While in the *rapha* patterns it was up to a human being to emerge from the NS through repentance and conversion, from the Synoptic perspective humankind is unable to help itself. The only way out of the NS is the intervention of a savior, an agent of divine restoration, that is Jesus Christ. The reason for the arrival of the divine Savior in the NS is the "tender mercy of God," (διὰ σπλάγχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν, Lk 1:78). This Divine attitude of compassion toward humankind corresponds with the idea that the Synoptic theology perceives people as being victimized and abused by the powers of Satan. Christ's intervention becomes effective only if people choose to associate themselves with him through *metanoia*. Just as during the Disruption humankind through their free will and choice cooperated with Satan, so also now through their own choosing people need to cooperate with the saving/restorative action of Christ in order to be healed and attain the Restored Positive State (RPS), namely the Kingdom of God.

As in the restorative patterns of the Hebrew Bible, also in the Synoptic patterns there are sets of contrasts and causations. In this way the

Demonic Disruption stands on the opposite side of Christ's Intervention. The intervention of the Divine Agent of restoration may be seen also as a disruption of Satan's Kingdom since Jesus is the one who binds the "strong one" and plunders his house (Mk 3:27). Thus, the demonic disruption of the divine OPS is paralleled antithetically with Christ's disruption of the NS, namely, the Kingdom of Satan. The polarization takes place also between human association with Satan in the phase of Disobedience and human association with Christ in the phase of *metanoia* and following Jesus. Similarly, the reality of Victimization of Humankind by Satan stands in contrast to the Restoration/Healing of Humankind by Christ just as a victim stands in contrast to the recipient of grace (healing). Another polarization occurs between the OPS/RPS and the NS. The reality of the RPS is ultimately the arrival of the fullness of the Kingdom of God in the eschaton. The OPS/RPS indicates life, eternal life, health, love, etc., while the NS is permeated with Satan, sin, death, illness, etc. Both concepts, OPS/RPS and the NS (in the sense of the Kingdom of Satan), in the Synoptic understanding seem to belong to an atemporal category. Consequently, there is eternal life (Mt 19:16; Lk 18:30, etc.) as well as eternal fire (Mt 18:8; 25:41). These two opposite, spiritual, and atemporal kingdoms radiate their character and exercise influence on the temporal, earthy life of humankind. Sickness and healing (health) are tangible and experientially understandable expressions of the nature of those opposite kingdoms.

Similar to the restorative patterns of the Hebrew Bible, also from the Synoptic perspective there is a cause/effect relation between various stages.

Thus, Demonic Disruption causes the Victimization of Humankind which in its turn causes Christ's Intervention that is the cause of Restoration of the Humankind.

One of the major differences that emerge from the comparison of *rapha* and Synoptic healing patterns is the presence of an agent. On the negative side of the circle (covered by the space between OPS, Disobedience, and NS) we find the negative agent of disruption, Satan. The negative agent of disruption is countered with the Divine Agent of Restoration, that is Christ who dominates the right side of the restorative circle (covered by the space between NS, *Metanoia*, and the Kingdom of God). In this sense both the Disruption of the OPS and its Restoration are effectuated by someone other than a human being. In the Hebrew Bible it was only a human being that on his or her own disrupted the divinely established OPS, and on his or her own through repentance obtained healing and restoration. In the Synoptic vision the human being effectuates these major changes whether negative or positive only in association with a *super-human* entity.

Synoptic Healing Theology in Relation to Form Critical Patterns of *marpe*^W

The nature of the Negative State (NS) is different in the Hebrew Bible and in the first three Gospels. In the *rapha* cases the transition from the NS to the Positive State (PS)² depends mostly on human conversion. Should the conversion not take place the NS is either prolonged or worsened. In the Synoptic presentation the NS is a temporal condition that will be transformed according to the choice of an individual. By accepting Christ's saving intervention through repentance/*metanoia* an individual is on his or her way toward the new life of the Kingdom of God (RPS). By rejecting Christ's saving/healing action through un-repentance, an individual is heading toward the Un-restored Negative State, that eternal fire in Hell. Consequently, the NS demands a choice between Satan and Christ, between un-repentance and conversion, between illness and health, Kingdom of God and Hell. The element of choice brings us back to the form critical patterns of *marpe*^W. As we have seen, the element of *choice* is critical in that healing trajectory. It is the *choice* of an individual that determines either health (*marpe*) or illness (NS). Here it is the illustration of the central importance of the individual's choice:

Negative State ← bad ← **CHOICE** → good → *Marpe*^W

² The Positive State (PS) in the healing theology of the Hebrew Bible was associated with the form critical patterns of *marpe*^W, while the Original Positive State (OPS) and Restored Positive State (RPS) were a part of the *rapha/marpe*^{HP} trajectories. Despite their distinctive theological shapes the PS and the RPS in some ways indicate the same reality. Therefore when speaking in relation to *marpe*^W patterns reflected in the Synoptics I use the expression PS instead of RPS although the ultimate meaning is the same.

In the Synoptic view the crucial importance of *choice* remains the same. This time, however, the choice needs to be made within the parameters of the Negative State (NS). Based upon the quality of the individual's choice, the person will either step out of the NS by undergoing *metanoia* and eventually reaching full healing in the Kingdom of God, or, by choosing un-repentance, will continue existing in the NS that eventually will reach its fullness in the form of Hell. Below is the illustration:



It is at this point that the Synoptic tradition merges two distinctive healing trajectories of the Hebrew Bible, that of *rapha*/*marpe*^{HP} and *marpe*^W. The effectiveness of Christ's restoration along the lines of *rapha* patterns depends on individual application of restorative principles encapsulated in the patterns of *marpe*^W, namely the choice of accepting Christ's healing. Consequently, if the two healing trajectories don't meet on a personal level then Christ's salvation remains meaningless for an individual. Therefore, it is in line with theological perspectives of *marpe*^W that Jesus stresses the importance of personal choice in the process of individual human restoration. Ultimately there are only two realities. In the present it is the reality of the Negative State (NS) with all its aggravations and the reality of the Positive State (PS) emerging from Jesus' healing activities. The PS however is still in its initial stages. It will acquire its full healing/saving force with the events of the Passion and the Resurrection. Yet,

even in its post-Easter character Jesus' healing still remains as a possibility. Through repentance from personal sins, rejection of the NS and faith in Jesus' death/resurrection as having restorative medicinal power one can turn toward the PS. This turning toward the PS is a choice that can be made. By not choosing this direction one stays on the course of the NS and continues living under the oppressive realities of the NS. The NS eventually in its final and intensified form becomes eternal damnation. There are only two options and only two ways a person can choose. There is no other alternative "he who is not with me is against me," (ὁ μὴ ὦν μετ' ἐμοῦ κατ' ἐμοῦ ἐστίν, Mt 12:30). One may dedicate himself only to one state, PS or NS: "No one can serve two masters," (Οὐδεὶς δύναται δυοὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν, Mt 6:24). The idea of choice is very clear. Good choice lead to PS, bad choice prolongs NS. One ultimately will receive what one chooses. The attainment of the PS means the full and complete healing on a personal level. This is the goal of Jesus' salvation. The notion of choice however cannot be taken as a one-time decision. Even though to choose the PS means the radical acceptance of Jesus and his healing, the entire process involves ongoing good choices of moral character during the course of earthly life. It is the assumption of new life with the mentality and morality of the Kingdom of Heaven. Ultimately the PS indicates the full reality of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom preached by Jesus is the future ideal that radiates upon the present life of the believer. It is the state of healing in its completion, that is the state of health.

It is important to realize that the idea of choice between PS and NS, between good and evil, life and death, health and sickness, heaven and hell, becomes feasible only at a certain point. While people are still enslaved by the forces of the NS they have neither power, awareness or possibility of making such a choice. The bondage of the Devil and sin keep people captives of the NS. Jesus' healing offered through teaching and redemptive sacrifice puts humanity in the position of being able to make a choice between the two contrasting realities. On the personal level Jesus' healing, both teaching and salvific death, does not yet transform a human being. In other words, the fact that Jesus accomplished salvation does not transfer anyone automatically into the PS. It only qualifies and enables a person to choose the PS. To be at the position of making a choice one needs to believe and accept Jesus' teaching and sacrifice as a divinely sanctioned medicine. In the absence of such a faith the entire healing agency of Christ remains ineffective and meaningless. Just as Jesus was unable to perform physical restorations in the absence of faith, so are his healing Gospel and sacrifice on the cross powerless for those who do not believe in the spiritual value of the achievements of the Agent of God.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Through the study of form critical patterns of *rapha/marpe* we have been able to establish theological healing perspectives and stages of the Hebrew Bible. In its preponderance of attestations the verb *rapha* secured its dominant theological sequence of the restorative process. In this model humankind was responsible for the Disruption of the divinely created Original Positive State. Human beings consequently suffered a Divine Disruption for the Transgression committed and they ended up in the Negative State of physical, emotional, religious, or national sickness. The undertaking of Conversion offered to a person a relatively prompt divine response in the form of the action of *rapha* or restoration. The Restored Positive State seemed to be qualitatively superior to the Original Positive State, which implies that the lesson learned from disrupting the divine primordial intent and the consecutive suffering during the phase of the Negative State, if concluded with Conversion, would turn out to be spiritually beneficial for the person or people involved. The *rapha* model viewed a human being mostly in terms of a passive recipient of divine restoration. God played a crucial role in the process of Restoration either by punishing transgressions in order to produce conversion or by graciously granting the healing force of *rapha*.

From the second type of healing action represented by *marpe* in wisdom literature we observed that a human being was ultimately in charge of his or her own health, healing or any blessings of the Positive State by making morally and ethically good choices. God was not directly involved in this healing equation,

standing only in the background and endorsing universal principles of retribution. In this sense a human being was seen as an active creator of his or her own health and healing.

In the theological trajectories of the Synoptic healing activity of Jesus we have discerned overlapping patterns with the stages identified in the *rapha/marpe* theology. The introduction of a new element in the process of Disruption of the divine Original Positive State, namely, the figure of Satan, has modified the entire sequence of the process of both Disruption and Restoration. Satan, the agent of Disruption, carries much of the responsibility for what has happened to human beings. Even though humankind suffers negative consequences of their association with the agent of Disruption, their liability appears significantly diminished in comparison to the *rapha* model. As the result of divine compassion for humankind's enduring various forms of spiritual and physical afflictions in the Negative State, God sends his Agent of Restoration. Thus, Jesus as the Agent of Restoration nullifies the pernicious effects of the agent of Disruption, that is Satan.

The Synoptists also employ the *choice* element associated with the word *marpe*. The effectiveness of Jesus' healing/restoration/salvation depends on a personal choice of accepting his divine message, reforming one's life, and following Jesus' teaching. Based upon individual choice a person may reach the reality of the Restored Positive State, or the Kingdom of God in the *eschaton*. On the other hand, the resistance to Jesus' Gospel or its rejection results in the

prolongation of the Negative State that intensifies into the reality of eternal fire in hell.

From the perspective of healing trajectories the Synoptic Gospels operate within the basic model identified in the *rapha/marpe* study. The greatest exception to the similarities between the OT and Synoptic healing views is due largely to the presence of the agent of Disruption as well as the Agent of Restoration. Yet, despite the presence of the two figures, healing analogies in both theologies are very strong. Although possible, it is not necessary to understand these similarities as the result of a conscious action of the Synoptic writers. Common features might be attributed to the non-theological nature of restoration, as in repairing a broken object. We saw it in the secular usage of *rapha*. Even when in the subsequent phases a theological super-structure was imposed on the secular pattern of restoration it still needed to operate within the basic logic of the sequence traced by the Original Positive State, Disruption, Negative State, Action of Restoration, and finally the Restored Positive State. It was the inquiry into the usage of *rapha/marpe* that produced the identification of these basic form critical stages. These stages in their simple and then more elaborate versions offered an organizational key to the restorative/healing theology of the Bible.

Going a step further, we might postulate that the total linguistic shape, pattern of relationships, sequence of theological concepts and ingrained recurring references carried by *rapha* offer a comprehensive interpretational paradigm for OT theology. In other words, probably any theological idea of the

Hebrew Bible related to divine interaction with humankind might be positioned and comprehended within the sequence of theological concepts embedded in the action of *rapha* (see Figure 2). Likewise, theological ranges of the healing/restorative action of Jesus (see Figure 5) might be adopted as the interpretational framework or a theological kernel for the Christian understanding of Jesus and his mission. Therefore, spiritual ideas of the NT related to the divine interaction with humankind through Christ find their coherence and meaning within theological trajectories embedded in Jesus' action of healing.

APPENDIX

Distribution of *rapha* by Books and Frequency¹

Distribution by Books		Distribution by Frequency
Genesis 20:17	Ecclesiastes 3:3	13x in Jeremiah
Genesis 50:2 x 2	Isaiah 6:10	7x in Psalms
Exodus 15:26	Isaiah 19:22	7x in Isaiah
Exodus 21:19 x 2	Isaiah 19:22	6x in Second Kings
Leviticus 13:18	Isaiah 30:26	5x in Hosea
Leviticus 13:37	Isaiah 53:5	4x in Second Chronicles
Leviticus 14:3	Isaiah 57:18	4x in Leviticus
Leviticus 14:48	Isaiah 57:19	4x in Ezekiel
Numbers 12:13	Jeremiah 3:22	3x in Genesis
Deuteronomy 28:27	Jeremiah 6:14	3x in Exodus
Deuteronomy 28:35	Jeremiah 8:11	3x in Deuteronomy
Deuteronomy 32:3	Jeremiah 8:22	2x in Job
1 Samuel 6:3	Jeremiah 15:18	1x in First Samuel
1 Kings 18:30	Jeremiah 17:14 x 2	1x in First Kings
2 Kings 2:21	Jeremiah 19:11	1x in Ecclesiastes
2 Kings 2:22	Jeremiah 30:17	1x in Lamentations
2 Kings 8:29	Jeremiah 33:6	1x in Zechariah
2 Kings 9:15	Jeremiah 51:8	
2 Kings 20:5	Jeremiah 51:9 x 2	
2 Kings 20:8	Lamentations 2:13	
2 Chronicles 7:14	Ezekiel 34:4	
2 Chronicles 16:12	Ezekiel 47:8	
2 Chronicles 22:6	Ezekiel 47:9	
2 Chronicles 30:20	Ezekiel 47:11	
Job 13:4	Hosea 5:13	
Job 5:18	Hosea 6:1	
Psalms 6:2 (HB 6:3)	Hosea 7:1	
Psalms 30:2 (HB 30:3)	Hosea 11:3	
Psalms 41:4 (HB 41:5)	Hosea 14:4	
Psalms 60:2 (HB 60:4)	Zechariah 11:16	
Psalms 103:3		
Psalms 107:20		
Psalms 147:3		

¹ Based on the statistics of Abraham Even-Shoshan, ed., *A New Concordance of the Bible: Thesaurus of the Language of the Bible: Hebrew and Aramaic Roots, Words, Proper Names, Phrases and Synonyms* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer Publishing House, 1990), 1089.

Distribution of *marpe* by Books and Frequency ²

By Books	By Frequency
Second Chronicles 21:18 Second Chronicles 36:16 Proverbs 4:22 Proverbs 6:15 Proverbs 12:18 Proverbs 13:17 Proverbs 14:3 Proverbs 15:4 Proverbs 16:24 Proverbs 29:1 Ecclesiastes 10:4 Jeremiah 8:15 Jeremiah 14:19 x 2 Jeremiah 33:6 Malachi 3:20	8x in Proverbs 4x in Jeremiah 2x in Second Chronicles 1x in Ecclesiastes 1x in Malachi

² Based on Even-Shoshan, *New Concordance of the Bible*, 713.

Synoptic Healing Accounts

Healing	Mark	Matthew	Luke
1. Simon's mother-in-law	Mk 1:29-31	8:14-15	4:38-39
2. Leper	Mk 1:40-45	8:1-4	5:12-16
3. Paralytic	Mk 2:1-12	9:1-8	5:17-21
4. Man with withered hand	Mk 3:1-6	12:9-14	6:6-11
5. Jairus' daughter	Mk 5:21-43	9:18-26	8:40-56
6. Woman with hemorrhage	Mk 5:24b-34	9:20-22	8:42b-48
7. Deaf and mute of Decapolis	Mk 7:31-37	-	-
8. Blind man of Bethsaida	Mk 8:22-26	-	-
9. Bartimaeus of Jericho	Mk 10:46-52	20:29-34	18:35-43
10. Centurion's servant	-	8:5-13	7:1-10
11. Two blind men	-	9:27-31	-
12. Two blind men	-	20:29-34	-
13. The blind and the lame in the Temple	-	21:14	-
14. Son of the widow of Nain	-	-	7:11-17
15. Crippled woman	-	-	13:10-17
16. Man with dropsy	-	-	14:1-6
17. Ten lepers	-	-	17:11-19
18. Ear of Malchus	-	-	22:50-51

Synoptic Accounts and References to Exorcisms

Exorcism	Mark	Matthew	Luke
Demoniac in the synagogue	1:23-28	-	4:31-37
Gerasene demoniac	5:1-20	8:28-34	8:26-39
Syrophenician woman's daughter	7:24-30	15:21-28	-
Epileptic boy	9:14-29	17:14-20	9:37-43a
Demoniac deaf and blind	-	9:32-34 12:22-36	11:14-23
Healing of a woman bound by Satan	-	-	13:10-17

References to Exorcism/Demons	Mark	Matthew	Luke
Mary Magdalene	-	-	8:2
The Beelzebul Controversy	3:22-27	9:32-34 12:22-30	11:14-23
The Temptations	1:12-13	4:1-11	4:1-13
Disciples' authority over demons and diseases	6:7	10:1	9:1 10:17-20
Summary Report 1	1:32-34	8:16-17	4:40-41
Summary Report 2	1:39	4:24-25 12:15-16	6:17-19

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